

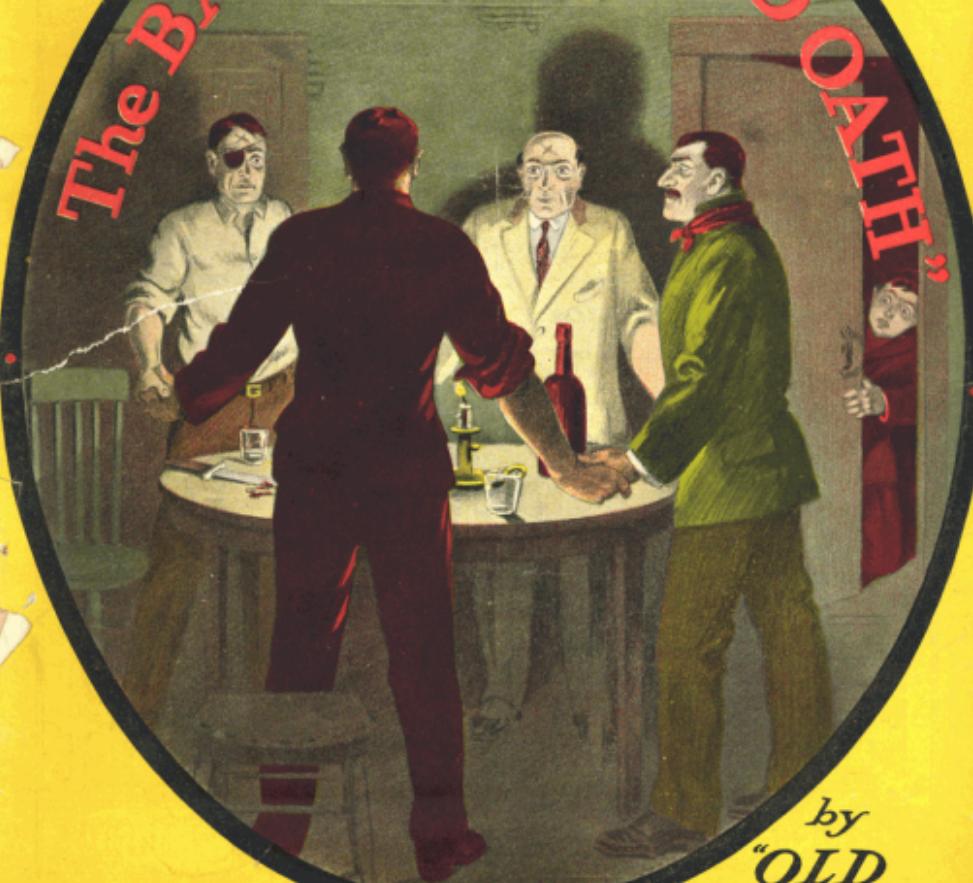


OLD SLEUTH WEEKLY

NO. 39

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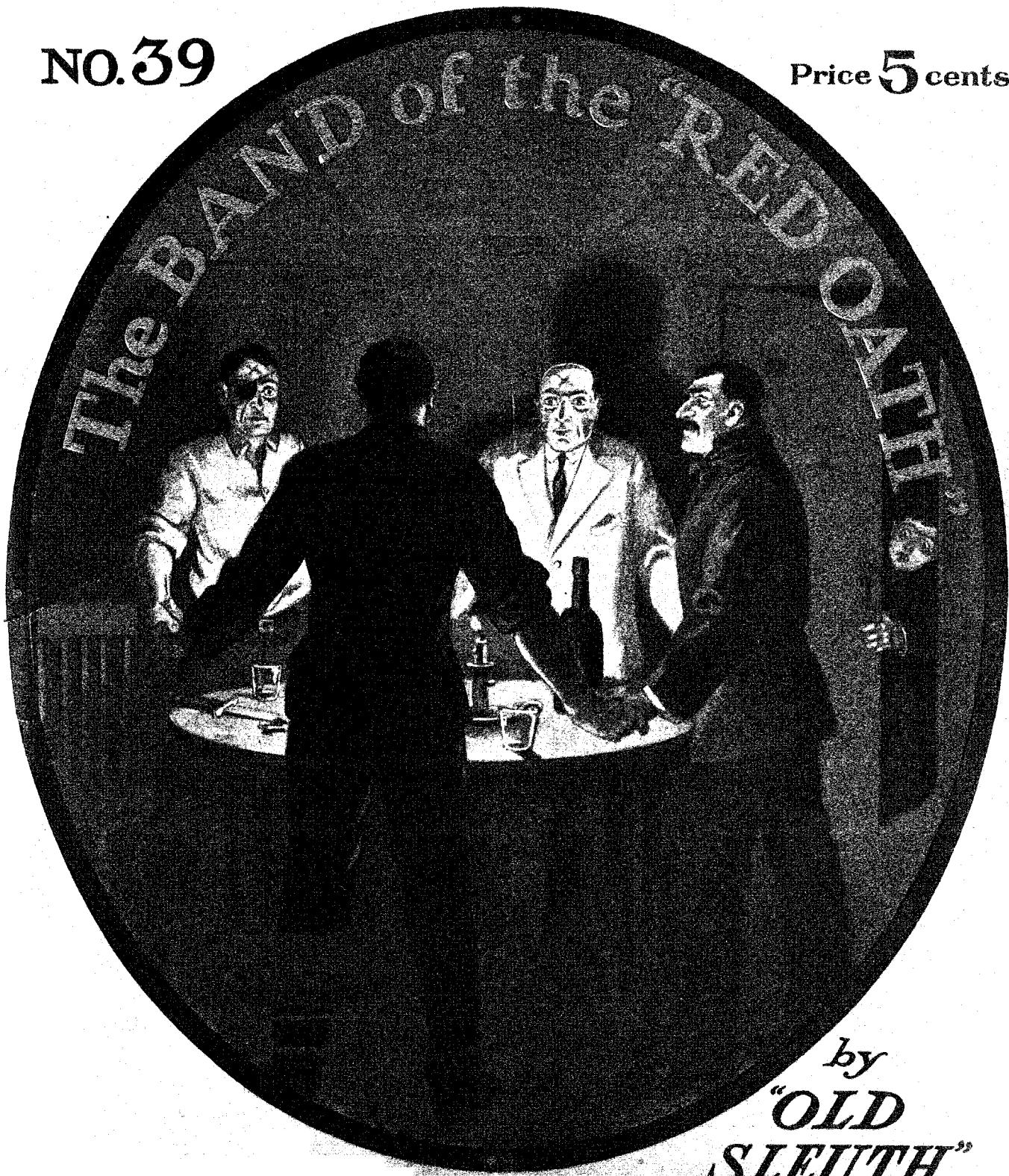
by
"OLD
SLEUTH"



OLD SLEUTH WEEKLY

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Price 5 cents



by
"OLD
SLEUTH"

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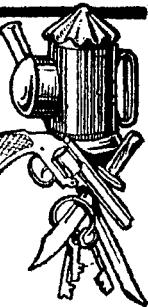
The Arthur Westbrook Company, Cleveland, U.S.A.



OLD SLEUTH WEEKLY

A Series of

THE MOST THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES EVER PUBLISHED



No. 39.

THE ARTHUR WESTBROOK COMPANY, CLEVELAND, U. S. A.

Vol. I.

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THE BAND OF THE "RED OATH"

OR

Run to Cover by a Government Spy.

By

"OLD SLEUTH."

CHAPTER I.

"**ARCHIE**, I am going to start you in on a dangerous lay to-night. How is it? Are you ready to die?"

A man with a fine face and athletic form was sitting opposite to a handsome, bright-eyed lad, and to the latter the words with which we open our narrative were addressed.

Archie did not turn pale, but a smile came over his face as he answered:

"I've been there before, Captain Bill."

Captain Bill appeared to meditate a moment, and then said:

"Archie, I hardly know what to do. I want to get certain information. I think I know how to do it, but the risks are great."

"I am ready to take any chances, Captain Bill."

"Yes, my lad knows nothing, fears nothing; but the men I have to deal with are a lot of desperate scoundrels who will stop at nothing."

"What is it you want me to do?"

"I'll let you know after I've considered the matter awhile. I will not take the chance unless absolutely forced to do so. The risks are too great, and I can't afford to lose you just yet, my lad."

"I ain't going to get lost, either; and you just mind, if there's any little trick you want to play, just set me down for it, and you can bet all you're worth I'll come out right side up with care."

Captain Bill Joyce was a secret Government special officer, under the immediate direction of one of the highest officials in the United States Government. He was a man whose courage and skill had been often tried in the revenue service. He had done detective work in the most satisfactory manner; indeed, he was looked upon as an "Old Reliable." Being a man of courage and great keenness, his fidelity was unquestioned. Although but eight-and-thirty, he had been for seventeen years under Government pay as a detective. He was a quiet, reticent man ordinarily, and his appearance did not indicate that when aroused he would become a raging lion.

When Captain Joyce was a boy at school he

had a chum. This chum had a remarkable character. Although gifted in the most remarkable manner in various ways, he yet lacked certain qualities necessary to make his many talents properly available. At the age of sixteen the two boyhood friends separated, and years passed until one night Captain Joyce, who had been a detective for many years, was on a lay. He had arrived at a tavern in a far Western town. He was under a disguise, being on the track of a noted counterfeiter. He had eaten his supper and was sitting in the bar-room, when a man entered who was evidently in the last stages of a fatal disease; but despite the man's changed appearance, our hero recognized him at a glance as his boyhood's old chum, Archie Pentz. The man was evidently very poor, and miserable in every way. Captain Joyce decided not to make himself known at first, but lay around and watch his old friend; and later on he thanked the fates that led him to that tavern on that particular night.

Archie Pentz was by two years the senior of our hero, but as youths they had been the closest of friends.

Archie entered the bar-room and sat down, with a sigh. He was evidently very weak, and indeed it was plainly evident that his existence was not a question of weeks, but of days.

The landlord of the tavern was behind the bar when Archie entered, and, looking at him in a pitying manner, he said:

"Were you in to supper, Archie?"

"I don't care for any supper to-night."

"See here, Archie," said the landlord, "this won't do, you need a good meal."

A moisture dimmed the invalid's eyes, and his weak voice trembled with emotion as he said:

"Caleb, I will not sponge on you any longer. I can't pay a cent, and I'm going away."

"Where will you go, Archie?"

"I'll go to the poor-house."

"No, sir, I don't. I never saw you before. See here, cully, you can't make nothing out of me. I'm clean run down, I am."

"Look at me well, Archie."

"You look prosperous enough; that's all I see."

"You and I were friends once."

"No, you won't, old man. I ain't turned out yet, and, until I am, you stay here and share what I've got."

"It's no use talking; I've made up my mind."

Captain Joyce had been a listener to the foregoing conversation—an interested listener. We have stated that he had not seen Archie Pentz for twelve or thirteen years, but he had heard of him occasionally, and knew that his old-time chum had become famous as a circus clown; and it was a sad picture to look upon this great mimic and acrobat, who had amused thousands and thousands of people, sitting there a physical wreck. All his old-time strength and agility had gone, and there he sat, weak, and helpless, and dying; and, what was far worse—starving.

Captain Joyce was under obligations to the father of Archie Pentz, and, besides, Archie had been the well-loved companion of his boyhood. Our hero had been prosperous. He had money at his command. He had little need for money, being a bachelor; his expenses were paid by the Government; and his heart glowed with a grateful warmth as he rose from his seat, crossed the room, and grasped the hand of Archie Pentz, with the salutation:

"Archie, my dear boy, God bless you!"

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN JOYCE had recognized Archie Pentz, but the recognition was not mutual, and when the supposed stranger addressed him, there came a momentary flash in the invalid's eyes as he said:

"You've got the best of me."

"You don't recognize me, eh?"

"No, sir, I don't. I never saw you before. See here, cully, you can't make nothing out of me. I'm clean run down, I am."

"Look at me well, Archie."

"You look prosperous enough; that's all I see."

"You and I were friends once."

"Were we?"

"Yes."

"What company did you travel with?"

"It's strange, Archie, you do not get on to me."

"I don't."

"See here."

Captain Joyce removed his soft hat, and, pushing back his hair, revealed an ugly scar. Archie glared at the disfigurement, and suddenly there came to his eyes a glad light. He rose from his seat and extended both hands, exclaiming:

"Billy Joyce, my old-time chum, as I live!"

"Yes, Archie, it's Billy Joyce, your old-time friend, and I am as good a friend to-day as I was in the days when—

"We were friends together in sunshine and shade."

"Billy, I'm glad to meet you."

"And I'm glad to meet you, Archie."

"I wish I was in better shape, Billy; but you can see I am sailing into the port mighty fast, with all sails set."

"Nonsense, old man. You've run down a bit, but we'll bring you around all right."

"Yes; I've run way down, Billy; this little heart clock of mine will stop pretty soon. But I'm glad to meet you, and it's a pleasure to see an old-time friend—and such friends as we were, Billy, eh?"

"Yes, Archie, we were great friends, and we are going to be yet. But see here, let's go into the supper-room; I want to see you eat."

"It's all right, Billy; I've no appetite."

"Yes, you have, Archie, old man. Listen: I was here, and overheard all that passed a minute ago. You're in hard luck, and so is the landlord, I take it; but he did a good stroke then for himself when he proved a friend to my old friend. I'll see that your friend Payne is at no loss. Come in and have a good meal, and while you're eating we'll have a talk. I've done a good deal of thinking within the last ten minutes, old man, and I've got you in charge now."

Turning to the landlord, Billy said:

"Old man, you get us a dainty meal at my expense, and get the best you can."

The landlord left the room, and Billy, again turning to Archie, said:

"Archie, you just listen to me: I don't want any protests from you. I won't have 'em. I'm under a debt—a money debt—to your family; your father helped my old dad when he needed help. If it hadn't been for old Alec Pentz, my dad would have lost his farm, and he might have brought up in the poor-house in his old days. I've got whips of money, Archie, and I owe money to your family, and, thank God! I've got a chance, in a small way, to pay back some of the obligation. And now, not one word from you, or I'll whale you, old man."

Archie smiled, and said:

"I used to give you a good tussle, Billy."

"Yes, Archie; you were the only lad in the county who could stand up against me at all; but I see the world has gone against you."

"Yes, Billy, I've had hard luck. Yes, hard luck in many ways; and, between us, I am not sorry that I am going to kick out, only for one thing. Yes, yes, my poor little Archie—what will become of him?"

"You were married, Archie?"

"Yes."

"And you've got a boy?"

"Yes; I have as fine a boy as ever lived."

"Listen, Archie: If anything does happen to you, your boy becomes my boy, do you mind? And I'll look after him as though he were indeed my own son."

"Billy Joyce, you have put new life into my heart. Of all men in the world to whom I'd prefer to trust my boy, you are the man."

"I love the boy already, Archie. So you need not fear; it will be all right. I'll pay back the money obligation to you, and your boy, and his mother."

"He has no mother, Billy."

"I'll be father and mother to him, Archie, if anything should happen."

"Don't put in that proviso, Billy. Something will happen. I tell you, it's only a question of days before I kick out."

"We can't say that."

"Yes, we can. The best doctors in the land gave me up as a hopeless case a year ago, and I knew myself I was wasting away. But I tell you I'll go with a free, glad heart now. Yes, Billy, I knew you as a boy; and I see the man is but the boy filled out. I won't say a word,

but you are the only man on earth from whom I would accept a charity."

"Hang it! Archie, if you mention that word charity between you and me you will make me mad. I am giving you nothing. I am only paying a debt, and one that should have been paid long, long ago. But it's all right now."

At that instant the landlord entered the room, and said, with a glad smile:

"Archie, your supper is ready. Come right along. The boy is at the table."

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN JOYCE leaped to his feet, and said, in a cheery tone:

"Come along, Archie!"

Archie rose slowly, and his friend extended his arm.

"I am pretty weak," said Archie.

"That is natural enough. You are excited now, but it will be all right in a few moments."

The two men proceeded to the dining-room—a low-ceilinged apartment—and at an oblong table sat a little lad of eight years.

"Halloo, papa!" he cried. "I am waiting for you."

Archie Pentz came to a halt; a tear moistened his eye, and, turning to Joyce, he whispered:

"And I am to leave that bright little chap to the cold mercies of the world."

"No, no, old-time friend; if anything does happen, you will leave that lad to me, and I will be a father and mother to him; I will hold him sacred as the apple of my eye."

"It's all right, then; I'm happy."

The men sat down to the table, and the little fellow, Archie, junior, commenced to chatter. Captain Joyce was charmed with him, and was forced to admit that he was the brightest lad of eight summers he had ever met.

The meal was finished, and our hero had a long talk with Archie. The latter told his sad story, which will be revealed as our narrative progresses.

On the following morning Captain Joyce held a long talk with Caleb Payne, the proprietor of the tavern, and the result was that the mortgage was arranged for, and all the comforts possible secured the former circus clown.

Archie Pentz, under the altered conditions, lived some months; but at length Death came stealing along and carried the former jester over the dark river. Billy Joyce at once took charge of the little fellow Archie, and had him educated, sending him to school until he was fourteen. Archie proved a bright scholar, and, besides, developed certain other most wonderful talents.

At this time our hero and his protégé were introduced to our readers. Archie was sixteen. He had served two years with the great detective, and proved an invaluable assistant. He was as keen as a razor, full of fun, possessed of the strength of an athlete, and a capacity for tricks that was simply marvelous. He had learned to love his adopted father, whom he called Uncle Bill, and the latter had learned to love the lad. He would have preferred to send the boy to college, but Archie protested it would be money and time wasted.

The lad's propensity to joke appeared to be an inherited trait, and his other qualities were also explainable, as it was a fact that the lad's grandfather on his mother's side had been a noted magician—a man who performed wonders in the black art.

Having presented our hero and his little aid, we return to the incidents with which we opened our narrative.

Billy Joyce had been detailed to work up one of the most remarkable cases of crime that ever disturbed the officials of the American Government. A gang of forgers had succeeded in making plates, not only of Government bills current, but of Government bonds; and so accurate were the plates, the greatest havoc had been created among bankers and dealers in notes and bonds, and it had been assigned to Billy, with other famous Government detectives, to not only run down the counterfeitors and forgers, but to gain possession of the spurious plates.

Each detective was working on his "own hook," following out his own plans; but they had secret signals, and were prepared to join one another at any moment in a general close-in. Billy Joyce had been nine months on the job, and he had run down a certain gang whom he believed had the plates. He had gained considerable evidence that the men were forgers. He could have closed in on them at any mo-

ment, but it was his point to gain possession of the plates, and consequently he was playing a waiting game. He had located a part of the gang in the suburbs of the city of Brooklyn. They did not know the detective's identity. It was evidently a part of their scheme to make the discovery, and it was also a part of their game, in all probability, to drop out the sleuth-hound, in case they succeeded in identifying him.

Billy Joyce had been several times in the vicinity of the little old house where these rascals abided. He had got on to their habits, and located them pretty well, but he dared not show up in their midst under any disguise; and that was the situation at the time our narrative opens.

The detective had spoken to little Archie, and, as recorded in our opening paragraphs, Archie had asked to be assigned to the job, and in answer to his declaration, "I will turn up all right," the detective, after a long spell of thought, said:

"I don't know, Archie. It would break my heart if anything should happen to you."

"But I tell you, Uncle Billy, it will be all right. I've been there—you know it."

"But the present affair is a little different from any we have ever had on hand, Archie."

"How is that?" demanded Archie.

"You see, there was one of our fellows who joined this gang. He hid around with them for nearly a year. He worked his scheme to the queen's taste, and had everything all right, when, at the last moment, they got on to him and they dropped him. When our man disappeared or was killed, his secret died with him. He never communicated what he had discovered. He was waiting for a grand close-in raid, and if he made any notes they are all lost."

"Do you think he was killed?"

"I'm not sure. It is possible they did not kill him; but they have got him covered up. He might as well be dead, as far as all he learned is concerned."

"And you want to get on to these fellows?"

"Yes, I do."

"I've a plan to offer, Uncle Billy."

"What is it, my boy?"

"I'll tell you," came the answer.

CHAPTER IV.

"Get along, sonny," said Captain Joyce.

"Let me go over and lay around, and see what I can pick up. You know I am pretty good at picking up points."

"That is so."

"I can do it again."

"But, you little cuss, you are too venturesome, and this business requires the finest discretion."

"You can trust me."

"These fellows are up to every point."

"Against men," amended Archie.

"That's so."

"I'm only a boy. I may be a girl, for fun, if I want to, eh?"

"I wonder if it will be safe to trust you?"

"Of course it will."

"As far as courage and quick wit are concerned, I know it will. But when it comes to real discretion?"

"You can trust me."

"The slightest give away, just at this time, would be bad."

"I'll give nothing away."

Captain Joyce had reason to know that the criminals were a very cut-and-dried lot. He had been on their track time and time again, but had been dropped in the rear every time. There was a mysterious woman in the case. He had tried to get a straight shadow on this female, but in some wonderful manner she had proved too much for him every time. After a still further conversation, he said:

"I've a mind to let you try it, Archie."

"Certainly you will let me try it on. I'll pick up something, you bet. I know something about this case."

"You do?"

"Yes, I do. I played a little detective business myself once."

The detective drew a book from his pocket. It contained a number of photographs. Under each photograph was a name and a note.

"Look this over, Archie. These are the portraits of a part of the gang."

There was one strange picture among them. It was a photograph of a veiled woman.

"How will I recognize this lady?" asked Archie.

"Ah! there's the mystery."

"You caught these on the instantaneous?"

"Yes."

"But you never could get the face of the woman?"

"No."

"I can get it."

"I guess not."

"I'll bet on it."

The detective went into full details, relating the traits of the different men and certain of their peculiarities, and he was talking to an apt listener.

"I guess I know how to go to work."

"It may prove a good scheme to put a boy on the case—a boy like you."

"Yes, sir."

"The hint you gave me is a good one. They are looking for men."

"Yes, sir."

"But they might tumble to anything suspicious on the part of even a boy. You see, they are wide awake for everything."

"That's all right."

"If they get the bulge on you once—"

"If they get it, Uncle Billy."

"You may be too confident."

"No; but I will lay low—yes, 'way down."

"You can go over to-morrow and take a peep all around."

"I'll go."

On the following day Archie started for Brooklyn. He crossed by the Hamilton Ferry, and, taking a car, rode out to a district back of what is known as Greenwood Cemetery. At the time of which we speak it was a pretty wild sort of a place thereabouts, especially at night. He looked around and finally saw a model, and he muttered:

"That will do."

Archie's model was a ragged lad of about his own age, and he knew that the men he was to shadow were probably well acquainted with his model's general appearance. He studied up his model well, got into conversation with him, and secured considerable information of a general character; and on this he returned to New York, and later met Captain Bill.

"Well, my lad, you're back?"

"I am here."

"What do you report?"

"I've got my model."

"That's good."

Archie told of the lad he had selected, and he added:

"I was in luck."

"How?"

"The lad goes away to-morrow on a pilot-boat; and, what is more, he is going to run away."

"But his point?"

"He has none; he is a wanderer—a local nomad."

"Well, you have done well."

The lad spent the balance of the day in preparing his disguise, and he knew just how to go to work. He had taken an "instantaneous" of his model, and laid the picture before Joyce while making up; and when made up, he placed his photo on the table, and said:

"How is this, Captain Billy?"

"It's all right."

"I'll pass?"

"You will."

"I'm going over to-night."

"Better work in the daylight at first."

"No, no; I'm on to something already."

"I'm getting doubtful, my lad."

"You need have no fears."

"Well, well, we will see what comes to-night."

It was about eight o'clock in the evening when Archie again crossed the Hamilton Ferry to Brooklyn, and he proceeded to the vicinity where he intended to hunt his little game. He found his way to a little tavern kept by an Englishman. He peeped in the window, and saw some of his men playing dominoes.

"Now, I'm in for some fun," he muttered, but little dreamed of the trap he had run into.

CHAPTER V.

Archie lay, looking into the bar-room. He had secured a position on a bank overlooking the place, and could see right into the room. He was merely making notes of the men. He was going slow, as he had promised. He lay and watched for over an hour, and then saw the men rise and go out. He followed at a safe distance, and saw them go, not to the house that

had been located as their abode, but to another old house a mile and a half away.

The house to which the men went was one of those old residences built some time in the seventeenth century—one of the old, old buildings, with the sloping roof, broad piazza, and low portico, and the attic part of the house was a mere garret. Into this house the lad saw the men go, and he muttered:

"I reckon I can get into that house."

He went very close under the portico, and like a monkey he climbed, and he soon gained the roof of the old porch, and down he dropped, for he overheard steps approaching.

"It won't do to be caught," he muttered.

He saw two men approach. They passed right along near where he lay, and had they not been engaged in earnest conversation they must have seen him. When they had passed into the house again, the lad muttered:

"That was a narrow squeeze, I'll admit."

A few moments passed, and all was still. The lad crept across the porch roof, and drew near to one of the low, projecting windows. He had little difficulty in raising the sash, and his actions were snake-like as he peeped in, and then peered around in a furtive manner.

"I reckon the coast is clear," he muttered, and he crawled into the room. A moment he lay and listened, and then drew his mask-lantern, and slowly slid the mask, and flashed the light around. He was in an unfurnished attic room.

"It's all hunky-dory so far!" he chuckled; and he moved to the stairs leading below. Down the stairs he stole, and found himself in a hall-way that ran clear across the house, and there were rooms on either side. He stepped to one of the rooms, and with the utmost caution opened the door. All was still. He waited, and then drew his lantern and slid the mask. The sharp ray of light was flashed around. The room was unfurnished.

"I reckon no one lives in this house, eh? It's a rendezvous," he muttered.

He again flashed his light around, when he saw a heap of torn letter-paper on the floor. He stepped into the room. He gathered up the bits of paper. It was evidently a letter that had been torn up.

"We'll look at this another time," he muttered; and so he passed from room to room, looking into them all. No discovery there. None of them was furnished.

"Now for a peep down-stairs; and here comes the tug-of-war!" he muttered.

With slow, stealthy step he stole down the stairs, and found himself in a broad hall which ran across the house, and on either side were two rooms, and from one of these rooms there came a light. He crept to the door, and peeped in through the key-hole. There were five men in the room. They were sitting around a rough table on benches or stools. They were a rough-looking set of men. They were talking in an excited manner, and in very loud tones. It was evident they had no idea of listeners being anywhere near.

The lad could overhear about every word that was spoken. All the men had something to say in turn, and he got on to a most important bit of information as one of the men remarked:

"We got away with one of them. We can get away with this fellow."

"Can't we get him to come and join us?" asked one of the men, with a coarse laugh.

"No," said another; "Captain Joyce don't work that way; but we can put up a job on him, all the same, and when we get him caged we're all right. We can send out a big pile and quit for a season."

Archie remained and overheard some very important talk, which will be disclosed in due time in the course of our story, and finally he got away from the house. He started to return to the city. It was after one o'clock in the morning. He was proceeding along, lost in deep thought, when suddenly a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice exclaimed:

"I've got you good enough now!"

CHAPTER VI.

Archie felt his heart stand still. It was dark; clouds hid the stars, and all he could see was the form of a strong man as he overheard his gruff voice. He remembered where he had been, and recalled what Captain Joyce had told him of the peril that would follow in case he was captured; and as the rough hand seized him he made up his mind that he was in the hands of one of the gang of forgers; but, although

shocked, he did not despair. He recovered from his sudden alarm in an instant, and said:

"Let go of me."

"I guess not; I've been laying for you a long time, my pet, and now I've got you good enough."

The words, "I've been laying for you a long time," caused Archie to peer more closely at his captor, and, despite the darkness, he saw the glint of brass buttons.

"Who are you?" the boy demanded, "and how dare you take hold of me? Let me go; I want to get home."

"Oh, you do, eh? So you've got a home, have you? Well, I'll take you to a good home, you rascal! Yes, I've laid for you, and now I've got you."

"See here, Mr. Policeman, you've made a mistake."

"Have I?"

"Yes."

"Oh, yes; I've made a mistake, sure enough."

"You have, sure."

"What are you doing here at such an hour?"

"I was over to see my cousin."

"Oh, yes, I see. Well, you'll come along with me and see your uncle."

The officer was a big, powerful fellow, and Archie had been gripped in such a manner as to leave him powerless to make a struggle. The officer walked him along, and Archie asked:

"Where are you taking me?"

"Where you will have a nice bed for the rest of the night."

"I tell you, officer, you have made a mistake."

"Hold on, Mickey; it's no use. I know you well enough. We've wanted you for a long time."

Archie was compelled to smile. He realized how he had run into a trap. The officer mistook him for his model; and the lad muttered:

"Well, here's a go, sure."

If he was not Mickey, why was he made up for Mickey? For he knew well enough that if he were taken to the station-house and searched, some very startling discoveries would be made. The lad was a quick thinker and very shrewd, and he reached the conclusion that it was better to pass as Mickey, under all the circumstances, than have an exposure follow, and, later on, the necessary explanations. He determined to say nothing, and let it be supposed he was Mickey; and he made up his mind that he could manage in some way to get out of the cell, in case he was not searched.

"Say, officer, let me go, won't you?"

"If I do, where will you go?"

"I'll skip away, and won't cause you any more trouble."

"I can't let you go. I must obey orders, and the charges against you are too serious. So it's no use talking to me."

The lad was, a few moments later, ushered into the sub-station, and the sergeant in charge exclaimed:

"Ah! so you've got Mickey at last, eh?"

"Yes, I've got him, sergeant."

"Well, I'm glad of it. We'll get rid of him now. Take him and lock him up."

Archie pretended to cry, and begged to be let go; but the sergeant was inexorable, and the doorman started to lead him back to the cells, when suddenly he came back, pushing the prisoner before him, and said:

"You'd better search him, sergeant."

The doorman pointed to Archie's pocket. The sergeant ran his hand in, and drew forth a mask-lantern.

"Halloo!" he said. "Great Caesar! but the little rascal has launched out as a regular burglar, eh? It's a good thing you captured him."

"I found that in the lots," said Archie.

The detective went through the lad, and found a small revolver—a miniature little shooter, but one which, at close range, could do a great deal of work.

Archie decided that it was better to keep his mouth shut; but he kept his eyes wide open and took in all the bearings, and a few moments later was led to a cell and locked in.

The doorman was a talkative old man, and said:

"I'm sorry for you, lad, very sorry; I am always sorry for these poor orphan boys; but, you know, the way of the transgressor is hard. I am an old man, Mickey; I've seen a good deal in my day, and I never saw the time when a criminal life did not end finally in disaster. I tell you, lad, you want to turn over a new leaf."

The doorman left the lad after a time, and the boy muttered:

"And now it's how am I going to get out of this? It won't do to stay here; the affair would cause too much talk, and lead to explanations that would spoil my little game."

The lad had been searched, but he had little articles secreted on his person that had escaped the scrutiny of the sergeant. He always went prepared for emergencies, and among other things he had in his possession was a file of the finest temper. He threw himself upon the bed while the doorman was talking to him, and pretended to fall asleep, but the moment the keeper went away he opened his eyes, and muttered:

"Now is my time."

CHAPTER VII.

The lad started right in with his work. He was patient, and had an instrument that went through iron almost as a saw goes through wood, and an hour after the departure of the doorman he was in the corridor.

Once in the corridor, Archie moved along cautiously, and had little difficulty in passing through a scantly barred window. He found himself in a yard. Once in the yard, the lad leaped the fence, but as he landed on the outside, he heard a shout, and two officers started for him. The lad darted straight across the street, where there was an open lot, and in the darkness, and like the wind, he darted away, the officers drawing their revolvers and firing in the air to scare him. He didn't scare, but kept on until suddenly he came to an embankment. He saw it just in time to slow up, and then he slid down. They were not so fortunate, and over they went, one after the other. The lad saw them go over. He had expected the catastrophe. He did not stop to see whether they were injured or not, but concluded that they were only shaken up a bit, as at the bottom of the cliff there was a bed of sand. Away he sped, and when, as he thought, at a safe distance, he worked his transform and started for the avenue. He met a policeman, who had evidently not heard of the row, and this officer he dodged, and then started for the ferry, and after a long tramp, he gained the ferry-gates. Fortunately, he was just in time to cross, as the boats were starting on the early morning half-hour trips. The lad reached the New York side in due time. Arrived at his home, he got into his own room, crawled into bed, and soon fell asleep, to dream over all manner of strange adventures.

On the following morning, at a late hour, the boy descended to the room of his friend. Captain Joyce was awaiting him.

"Why, my lad, you had a night of it?"

"I was locked up in station-house."

"And how did you get out?"

"I worked my way out."

"And how did it all come about?"

Archie laughed, and said:

"I'll have to look out next time when I take a model."

The youth proceeded and told how he had been mistaken for Mickey, and how he had been locked up.

Captain Joyce laughed heartily, as Archie had a quaint and amusing way of telling his adventures. When he had concluded his narrative, the captain said:

"You can't work over there again under that disguise."

"No; but it served me well."

"I think you were served pretty well."

"Oh, I've got on to something."

The boy told how he had watched the men at the beer-saloon, and how he had followed them to the old house, and how he had made an entrance into the house and had listened to their talk.

"Well, you are a great lad; but you took large risks."

"Oh, I told you I would always come out right side up with care, and so I will; and it's lucky I got in there when I did, and overheard all that passed. I've made a discovery that will surprise you. They are on to you."

"They are on to me?"

"Yes, sir; and they have got you down fine, and, what is more, they have been on to you for some time."

Captain Joyce was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"You do really surprise me, Archie."

"It's true."

"How did they get on to the fact that I was on their track?"

"That's a secret they did not open up; but they have been planning for weeks to drop you, and they almost did the trick one night—the night you were down to Manhattan; but somehow you changed your course and threw them off. But they expected that night to smother you and cast your body into the sea, and make it appear that you had been bathing and had drowned."

"This is very important news you bring, my lad."

"I heard more."

"Go ahead."

"They have a big pile of manufactured stuff, some of which they say is perfect. One of them said he'd take the chances as far as the "queer" was concerned, and deposit it in a national bank. They would run this stuff all out, but they fear you, and it is their game to drop you out, and then flood the stuff all over the country, and then all hands will jump the country. They are on to your partners as well; in fact, they appear to have the names and addresses of all the Government officials; but you are the man they fear, and you are the man they mean to drop out."

The detective sat a long time lost in thought, but at length said:

"This is very important information you bring me, Archie."

"I know it, and it was to get this information that I went over there and took the chances."

"And they have a lot of the stuff ready to shove?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"That is something I have not got on to yet."

"If we could find out where they had the "queer," we might close in on the whole business."

"I will have more news for you by to-morrow night," came the answer.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARCHE was a daring little fellow, and not at all scared by the result of his adventures, as described.

"I don't know about letting you go over there again, Archie," said Captain Joyce.

"What will you do—back down?"

"No; I will go myself."

"But you do not know how well they have got you down; you told me the truth when you said they were the keenest gang of villains you had ever shadowed."

"They are."

"But they are not on to me yet."

"How do you know?"

"If they had been, I would have got on to it; so they don't consider me in the race, that's sure."

"But they must know about you."

"I'll know more about them before I am through. But, captain, don't you think it would be a good idea for us to make a change?"

"I've been thinking of that, my lad."

"We had better 'fold our tents,' as the Arabs, and silently steal away' from this abiding-place."

"You're right."

"We're not afraid of them, but it is not convenient to have them able to spot us at their leisure."

"We will change. But, tell me, did you get on to the track of the veiled woman?"

"I did not see her."

"Did they speak of her?"

"Can't remember that they did."

"And what is your plan?"

"I'll go over there again."

"How will you work it this time? Surely they are on to your cover?"

"They are not on to it. The police are, that's all."

"You will have to blind the police."

"Yes, I will; and I'll make it a day racket."

"I tell you, I am afraid about you."

"You need not be; and I ask, as a special favor, that you will let me work this once more. I'll go through."

"You can try it as a day tour; but I will talk with you again before I consent to your going for them at night, unless I go with you."

"I may need you."

Shortly after midday, Archie started for Brooklyn. He had not told Captain Joyce how he intended to make up; but it was as veiled lady that he had started out for a second shadow of the forgers. He did not wear a close veil, but he had got himself up well. His features

were naturally very delicate and handsome, and a girl he could make a very pretty appearance. He crossed by the same ferry, and on the boat, while sitting in the ladies' cabin, he observed a closely veiled woman. She did not answer to the photograph he had seen, but she was veiled, and on a Hamilton Avenue ferry-boat, and these circumstances were all very suggestive. Captain Joyce had spoken of a veiled woman as a party whom he had been unable to track down, and Archie thought that good luck had thrown him on to the track of that very woman.

Upon leaving the boat, the veiled woman took a car that ran out to the vicinity of the place where the forgers lived. She alighted from the car at the proper street, and started to walk directly up to the scene of the lad's previous night's adventures. The lad followed on, saw her enter the house where the counterfeitors hung out—that is, one of the houses, for the men did not all reside under one roof.

Archie lay around for a long time, and then saw the woman come forth, and he followed on her trail. She went straight toward the famous cemetery where so many illustrious dead reposed. Archie followed, and a strange suspicion began to run through his mind.

"I wonder where she is going?" muttered the lad; and suddenly the woman disappeared. "Great Scott!" ejaculated the lad, as a cold shudder ran through his frame.

He walked along, and came to where there was quite a deep excavation, and at the bottom of this excavation sat the woman, as cool and serene as though nothing at all unusual had occurred.

Archie had been so taken aback that he walked straight up to the edge of the excavation, and was looking down, when suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned, and a second woman confronted him.

"Ah! excuse me," said the second woman, who was a strong, robust creature with a rough face and black, piercing eyes. "I thought you were my daughter."

She stood with a smile on her face and a glint in her eyes.

"Hold that thing!" came a command from below.

The large woman grasped hold of our little hero, and he stood perfectly passive. The veiled woman walked around, and advancing up the bank, approached the spot where the disguised lad and the black-eyed woman stood. The veiled woman approached close to Archie, and asked:

"Why have you been following me?"

"I thought you were my sister," came the answer.

"What made you think I was your sister?"

"You look like my sister."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I saw your face."

"Where?"

"I won't tell."

"You now know I am not your sister?"

"Yes."

"Then why do you continue to follow me?"

"For fun."

"We'll teach her a lesson, mother," said the veiled woman.

"Yes, we will. She is an impudent thing."

Archie stood perfectly cool and watchful. He knew that they intended to play a trick, but, as stated, he waited, and was on his guard.

CHAPTER IX.

The larger woman suddenly made a movement to place a silk handkerchief to Archie's lips. The lad, however, as we have said, was on his guard, and he quickly made a demonstration. He avoided the handkerchief, and gave the larger woman a push that sent her reeling. He then leaped forward and tore the veil from the younger lady's face. She screamed, and Archie pretended to scratch and fight, woman fashion. The elder woman recovered her feet, and made a rush at him, and Archie had both pitching into him at the same instant. But he moved around in the most lively manner, and, as the saying goes, made the "fur fly." Especially rough was he on the elder woman. Twice he sent her to grass, but the younger one he simply pulled and hauled; and finally, when they were both played out, he started and ran away. He ran until he came to a field where some building was going on, and he darted out of sight. And, presto, change! the girl disappeared, and a lad emerged from the place where the girl had entered.

The lad walked along in a careless manner. He had a heavy band of crape around his hat, carried a cane, and was an respectable-looking mourner as ever wept over a tombstone. He walked along toward the place where he had been engaged in the tussle with the two women, and as he had destroyed the veil that the younger one had worn, he had a full view of her face at his leisure, as the two women were sitting on a greensward, talking over their adventure. No one would have suspected that the handsome youth was the pretended girl who had been engaged in the scuffle. Archie had removed the paint from his face, and appeared with no other disguise than the band around his hat.

He walked on toward the two women, acting like a person who was merely strolling through the cemetery, but the moment he drew near the two women both uttered exclamations of amazement, and the younger woman, gazing at the handsome youth, exclaimed:

"Look, look! what does it mean?"

The elder woman looked, and she muttered:

"It's a ghost!"

"No, no; but it's a mystery!" cried the younger.

Archie had approached the excavation. He had observed their start of surprise; he had overheard their unguarded exclamations and comments; but he did not betray the fact.

The two women had risen to their feet, and they stood and gazed with eager expressions upon their faces, and at length the younger again asked:

"What does it mean?"

"The resemblance is perfect," came the answer.

Archie overheard the latter singular remark. He was a quick thinker, yet he could not discern the meaning of the strange remarks of the two women; but he knew that something was up. At first the idea ran through his mind that he had been recognized, but an instant later he dismissed the suspicion, and as a test started to walk away, and he overheard the younger woman say:

"I shall speak to him."

"Nonsense!" answered the elder; "it is only an accidental resemblance."

"No, no. It is too striking. I shall ask him some questions."

The younger woman, whose face the disguised youth had uncovered, was decidedly handsome. She was a woman of about thirty and possessed a very intelligent face. She approached Archie, the latter having stopped to pick up a wild-flower growing in his path.

"You will excuse me," said the woman, "but are you acquainted with the paths in this cemetery?"

"I am not; I am a stranger hereabouts."

The lady approached closer, and then appeared to stare in surprise; she peered eagerly in the youth's face, causing the latter to ask, in an innocent manner:

"Why do you gaze at me so?"

"You will excuse me, my young friend, but it is very remarkable. May I ask your name?"

"My name is Brown."

"Where do you live?"

"I have been living in Philadelphia."

"And your name is Brown?"

"I do not know what my real name is, but I have been called Brown."

The lad was making these statements as a misleader, little dreaming how strangely he had fallen upon the proper course of action necessary to bring about certain startling developments.

"You are known as Brown?"

"Yes."

"Then Brown is not your real name?"

"I don't know whether it is or not."

"Where were you born?"

"I don't know."

"Are your parents living?"

"No; I am an orphan."

"Where did your parents live?"

The youth had acted his part well as an innocent and unsuspecting lad, but he demanded:

"Who are you, and why do you ask me these questions?"

"I have good reason for asking you these questions."

"What are your reasons?"

"I will tell you in good time; but I want you to answer my questions."

"I will not answer any more questions."

"I think you never knew your father and mother."

The youth appeared to start in surprise.

"Ahl I thought so. And now let me tell you, I think I knew your father and mother."

Archie had been thinking, and the woman's last remark put him on his guard. He made up his mind that the woman was up to some trick, and he resolved to lead her on by running his narrative in the same line as he had started.

"You knew my father and mother?" he said.

"Yes."

The youth laughed.

"Why do you laugh?"

"My father and mother died a great many years ago, and I was put in an orphan asylum. I guess you are mistaken all round."

"My dear boy, I think I can make some very startling revelations to you."

"Will you?" asked the lad.

"Yes, I will," came the answer.

CHAPTER X.

"All right," said Archie. "I am really anxious to hear your revelations."

"Oh, I will not tell you all I have to reveal until you tell me something about yourself."

"Why should I tell you anything about myself? I do not know you. I never saw you before."

"You want to hear my revelations, don't you?"

"Yes."

"I will not tell you a word until you tell me something about yourself."

Archie had noticed that the woman who was talking to him had passed a signal to the other woman, and the latter had gone away. He did not like the movement. It came over him that some scheme was on hand. He remembered that he was dealing with wonderfully keen schemers, and it was just possible that the resemblance story was a trick—that they had intended that he should overhear the remark, and that all the woman was saying to him was part of a scheme.

"I guess you are making fun of me," he said, "and I will bid you good-day."

"No, you must not go."

"Who will stop me? What do you mean?"

"Oh, I can not stop you from going; but I tell you I know something about you."

"I don't care, as long as you make a secret of it. I don't care anything about you at all."

The woman appeared puzzled. Archie studied her face, and he also was puzzled.

"Where do you live?"

"I'm going to live in New York."

"Then you have not been living there?"

"Only a few days."

"Have you any friends?"

"I have one friend."

"Who is he?"

"A gentleman who took me out of the asylum."

"Does he live in New York?"

"No."

"Where does he live?"

"In Philadelphia. He sent me on to a friend of his in New York—a lawyer. I am to study law in an office in New York."

"And where do you live?"

"I'm going to live with my friend the lawyer."

"And where does he live?"

"I do not know the name of the street."

"And you do not know anything about your father or your mother?"

"No."

"You have no relations that you know of?"

"I know of no relations."

The woman appeared to think a moment, and then said:

"My lad, you do not appear disposed to trust me."

"You are a stranger to me."

"Have you been deceiving me?"

"No; and now I am going away."

"I must see you some time again."

"I don't see why you desire to bother me."

"I do not wish to bother you; but I will tell you this much: if what I suspect is true, you are being defrauded."

"What nonsense!"

"It is not nonsense."

"If you knew my father and mother, why do you ask me all these questions? How is it you do not know me?"

"I do know you."

"Then why did you ask my name?"

"I will not tell you now; but I will tell you this much—I recognized you."

"You recognized me, and yet you asked me all sorts of questions?"

"I never saw you before to-day, and yet I recognized you. Yes, I recognized you by your resemblance to your mother."

"Where is my mother?"

"Your mother is dead."

"And where is my father?"

"I do not know, but I suppose, from your story, that he must be dead."

"What a lot of nonsense you are giving me."

"I'm not giving you a lot of nonsense. You are being wronged out of a fortune. I know you, as I said, by your resemblance. I will be your friend, if you will let me."

Archie was bothered. He could not conceive why the woman, in order to carry out her scheme, whatever it might be, should concoct such a ridiculous story.

"I guess you are making fun of me."

"No, I am not. Did you ever hear the name of Richmond?"

"Certainly, I've often heard the name."

"Did you ever hear the name as applied to yourself?"

"Never."

"There is a mystery here," muttered the woman. "And now, young sir, I tell you I have a great revelation to make to you."

"Well, make it."

"No; I must make some inquiries first. Will you come with me?"

"No, I won't."

"Why not?"

"I do not know you, and have been warned not to have anything to say to strangers."

"But I must see you again."

"That will do me no harm."

"Will you see me?"

"Where do you live?"

"I will tell you some day. In the meantime, I want to ask a favor of you. Are you acquainted at all in New York—with the streets?"

"Just a little."

"Do you know where the corner of Broadway and Fourteenth Street is?"

"Yes, I do."

"Will you meet me there?"

"I can not meet you."

"You must meet me, and I will tell you something very important."

"Well, I will meet you," said Archie.

CHAPTER XI.

We will state that our little hero demurred some time before he consented to meet the strange woman, as recorded at the close of our preceding chapter, but finally he said:

"Yes; I will meet you. And now I will tell you something. I have always been anxious to find out something about my parents."

"Then you do not know anything about them?"

"No."

The lad was playing a part—falling into the scheme with a purpose. He believed every statement of the woman to be a falsehood. He believed she was just working a game, and he was glad to have her make an appointment to meet him later on, as it would give him a chance to consult with Captain Joyce.

The lad felt quite pleased in having uncovered the woman's face. He had a little triumph to relate there. The woman had baffled the older detectives several times, and Archie had torn aside her mask the first time. He felt that a good step forward. What the woman's game was in playing him as though she had known him before was what he desired to get at.

In the first place, he knew her statements were false, for he knew all about his father. There was no mystery about his parentage. He knew his mother had died when he was a baby. He had never been in an orphan asylum, and he was not the heir to a fortune, as the woman had suggested; neither was he being defrauded by any one. He and the woman held a few moments' further conversation. We will not detail all that passed. Archie played his part well, and finally it was agreed that he was to meet her at ten o'clock at the corner of Broadway and Fourteenth Street.

When Archie separated from the woman he walked off in a perfectly natural manner, and concluded to leave his bundle of clothes—his disguise—until he had a good opportunity for recovering them. He wandered down toward the Fifth Avenue exit from the cemetery.

It was quite a long walk from the point where he had held the talk with the veiled woman, and as he walked along he stopped many times

to gaze at some of the monuments, and he was on his guard to see that he was not followed. Satisfied upon the latter point, he finally made a détour and got around to the place where he had left his bundle. He secured the latter, and then made his way over to the entrance to the cemetery, and took a car for the ferry, made his transfer, and late in the afternoon he arrived at the hotel in which he had been notified he and Captain Joyce were to take up their residence. He was well satisfied with the progress of his work, and on his return to the city he had taken very particular care to learn whether or not he was being shadowed, and he felt assured that it was all right.

It was some time before Captain Joyce appeared, and when he entered the room, he said:

"I fear I did wrong to let you work up this matter."

"You think you did wrong, eh?"

"Yes; we are dealing with the keenest rascals in the United States."

"I'm pretty keen."

"Yes, but you lack experience."

"I'm getting it, Uncle Billy."

"It may prove costly just at present."

"I guess not; but I uncovered the masked woman."

"What?"

"I've seen that woman, and talked with her."

Captain Joyce shuddered as he said:

"It is as I feared."

"You have nothing to fear. You had better wait and hear my story."

"Let's hear it."

"I'm to meet the woman to-night."

"Where?"

"At the corner of Broadway and Fourteenth Street."

"Great guns! but we've lost a card."

"You think so? Why do you not wait and hear what I've got to tell? And if I meet the woman, you can meet her also."

"There is something in that."

Archie told his story—told all the details of his adventures, repeated word for word everything that had been said.

As the lad proceeded with his narrative the eyes of the detective expressed his eager interest, and when the lad concluded, he said:

"There, have I made a mix of it?"

"I must think, Archie."

"I've given away nothing. I've seen the woman's face; you will have a chance to see it, and we will get on to their scheme."

"The woman mentioned the name Richmond?"

"Yes."

"You are sure about the name?"

"Certainly. And now, what do you think of it now?"

"I must have time to think, Archie."

"Have I done anything wrong?"

"No. Your story is a very remarkable one."

"I've told it just as it occurred. You know as much about the whole affair as though you had been there, and now you must have some idea as to what her scheme is."

"You think the woman has a scheme?"

"Certainly. What do you think her scheme is?"

"We must wait and let it develop."

"You have a suspicion?"

"Yes."

"Let me in."

"Not at present, Archie."

"I am to help carry it out?"

"Yes."

"Then I should know what your real suspicions are."

"You must work on the same line as you have been working, and we will see what comes of it all."

"I must know something."

"My lad, give me time to think. You shall know something; and soon we must play a great game."

CHAPTER XII.

DETECTIVE JOYCE had questioned and cross-questioned Archie very closely as concerned the conversation with the veiled woman; and, as the narrative progresses, our readers will learn that several very startling suggestions were opened up to the great special.

"It was a cute game they worked," said Archie.

"How?"

"To try and come that resemblance business."

Archie's eyes were fixed upon the detective,

and he saw a strange light show upon the great officer's face, and suddenly he exclaimed:

"Great Scott!"

"Well?" ejaculated Captain Joyce.

"I begin to suspect."

"What do you begin to suspect?"

"That there is something in that resemblance business, after all."

"What leads you to so suspect?"

"The expression of your face."

Captain Joyce laughed, and said:

"I must look out for my face."

"Well, I saw the glance. Come, tell me what it means."

"What do you think it means?"

"I can tell what it means."

"Do so."

"I thought it was only a joke."

"You are partly correct."

"But there is something back?"

"There is."

"What is it?"

"You can trust me?"

"Always."

"Explanations are not in order at this moment. You are now to receive full instructions."

"All right."

"I said you were partly right."

"Yes."

"It is a game, and, as I said, we will have to play a great game against it; you will require all the nerve and address you ever possessed."

"I am ready."

"I'll tell you what I think. There might be an attempt to abduct you."

The lad laughed, and said:

"What do they want of me?"

"That I can't tell you; but I've an idea, and it may be a good scheme to let them abduct you."

"I am willing."

"I do not see that any harm will come to you, and, at any rate, I will be on hand."

"Great guns! I see what you mean."

"Let's hear how you take it?"

"If they abduct me, they will take me to the inner sanctuary?"

"That's the idea. When they abduct you, I will merely let you play as innocent."

"I see."

"I will be on hand to save you from harm."

"Yes."

"It may be that I will want to leave you a little time in their hands."

"I am willing to stay if they give me good board."

"I reckon they will do that."

"It is a big scheme."

"It is."

"I am glad of the chance to do my part," said Archie; "but—"

"Well?"

"You should tell me something."

"I will, some day."

"Why not at once?"

"Simply because it is all conjecture in my mind. We may make some very important discoveries as concerns you."

"I see—I see," said the lad, in a meditative tone.

"And, what is more," continued the detective, "we may get on to this gang straight."

"Answer me one question: is there anything in this resemblance business?"

"I think it possible that there is."

"What can it be?"

"You can trust me, Archie?"

"I can."

"Your father made certain very strange revelations to me, and your adventure opens up possibilities that your father did not dream of when talking to me."

"I am willing to wait until you think it the proper time to make me your confidant."

"That is right, my son. And now we must work up this little affair."

"What game shall I play?"

"You are a very cute lad. It is a most singular fact that you struck a trail that is in full accord with my plans under the present aspect of the affair. I want you to run on one line—stick to the story you told—know nothing; let them know it all, or reveal to you as they choose. You must pretend to be deceived—you must pretend to accept this woman as your friend, in case she should seek your friendship."

Archie was delighted with the part he was to play in the great game. He was a lad who knew no fear, and he loved adventure. He de-

lighted in peril, and it was the greatest pleasure of his life to be engaged in a game of cunning.

At length night came. All the arrangements, as far as the detective was concerned, were completed, and at the appointed hour Archie started for the corner of Broadway and Fourteenth Street. He waited fully half an hour, when a carriage drew up to the curb and a beautiful lady, elegantly dressed, alighted. She did not go directly toward the lad, but walked by him, and Archie, who had studied up the detective's trait of getting on to the peculiarities of people, at once recognized the elegantly dressed lady as the same person he had met in the cemetery.

The lady did not come toward him for some time; indeed, she disappeared, and Archie was kept waiting so long he finally determined that he had been fooled, and again thought it possible that he had made a mistake. But just as he had reached the latter conclusion, he again saw the lady, and she advanced directly toward him, and said:

"Ah! I see you are here. I did not recognize you at first."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Yes, I am here," said Archie; and he added:

"I don't know as I did right to come."

"Why not?"

"I was compelled to steal away."

"You were?"

"Yes; and I do not think it a good thing to commence my career in New York by deceit."

"Then why did you come?"

"Did you not arouse my curiosity?"

"If I did, it was in your interest."

"This is all very strange to me; but mine has been a strange life."

"I promised you a revelation."

"You did."

"Will you come with me?"

"Go with you?"

"Yes."

"I dare not."

"Why not?"

"It is so late now, I think I must return, and meet you some other time."

"No; you must go with me."

"I can not go."

"You fear the gentleman with whom you are to serve?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember what I told you?"

"I remember what you told me."

"I told you the truth."

"Will you explain what you mean?"

"We can not stand here and talk."

"Why not?"

"We may be observed. You must go with me."

"I dare not."

"You need not fear; and when you have heard my revelation you will see you have no reason to fear. I have a great surprise for you. The interest of your whole future life demands that you should come with me."

"How long will you detain me?"

"I will be frank; it will be some hours before you can return; but when you hear what I have to tell you, I am sure you will be glad that you took the chance and went with me."

"You excite my curiosity. All this is very strange."

"It is stranger than you dream."

"I do wish I dared to go."

"You must dare."

"I may lose my friend."

"If you lose your friend, I will guarantee to be a better one; and as to a position, bah! I can get you one worth a hundred times the one promised you. I am a rich woman."

The youth appeared to consider well, and at length said:

"I will go."

"Yes, I knew you would go; and it is well for you that you do go, and you will be glad in the end, you may be sure. Come."

The lady started for the carriage. Archie followed, but as he did so he glanced around. He was walking behind his fair conductress, and she did not see his movements. He heard a noise sounding like a child playing upon a Jew's-harp. It was not a sound calculated to attract any special attention in a great city. The lad, however, understood it well, and his heart was bounding when the lady stopped at the coach door, and said:

"Get in."

The lad entered the carriage, and the next instant, as he afterward related, he became un-

conscious. How long he remained unconscious, he did not know; but when he revived he found himself in an elegant apartment, and the woman who had been his conductress stood over him. He looked around in amazement. He was dazed, and, what is more, he was bewildered, as he exclaimed:

"Where am I?"

"You are all right."

"How did I get here?"

"Poor boy! Your feelings overcame you, and you fainted."

The lad began fully to recover his senses, and he determined, in his own mind, that he had been chloroformed the instant he got into the carriage. His first impulse was to upbraid the lady, but a second resolve restrained him. He remembered he was to play a part.

"It is so strange!" he murmured.

"It's all right. You are here, safe and sound."

"Where am I?"

"You are in my house."

The lad looked around. He was in a very elegantly furnished apartment. There were expensive carpets, rich furniture, and many mirrors, beside costly articles of bico-a-brac.

"I am dazed," he said. "It seems like a fairy dream."

"You are awake, and it is real."

"It is strange that I should have fainted."

"You were overcome by excitement."

"What caused me to be excited?"

"Something I told you."

"What did you tell me? I do not remember."

"I will repeat what I said."

"Do so."

"Not until you are prepared to listen. I do not wish you to faint again. And now we will talk."

"You were to tell me something."

"Yes."

"Do so."

"I will; but, first, you must answer me a few questions. What was your father's name?"

"I told you I did not remember my father."

"I fear you did not tell me the truth."

"I can tell you no more. I am afraid of you."

"You need not fear me; I am your friend. And now I am going to show you something that will cause you to have full confidence in me."

"I wish I could have full confidence in you."

"Yes, you must have. I know you have deceived me, and you must tell me the truth. I said I would make a revelation to you, and I am prepared to do so. Look in that mirror. Keep your eyes fixed upon it. Do not faint when you see something wonderful. Do not make a cry. Be a man."

Archie fixed his eyes on the mirror, and saw a sight that caused his heart to stand still.

CHAPTER XIV.

We have written that Archie stood transfixed, and such was the case; and possibly no mortal ever had greater occasion for surprise; for there, revealed in the mirror, was the face and figure of a lovely girl, and the face of the girl was an exact counterpart of the face of the amazed youth. He stood, as stated, gazing in speechless amazement. The fair vision at length faded away from the surface of the mirror, and the youth still stood and gazed, lost in utter bewilderment.

At length the woman broke the silence.

"Have I not kept my word?"

Archie found voice, and he said:

"What does it all mean?"

"Ah! this is my mystery."

"How did you conjure up that vision?"

"You saw the resemblance?"

"It was my own face."

"Yes, in one sense; but it was not your own face."

"I see."

"What do you see?"

"It was a trick."

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, I can not be deceived."

"You think you were deceived?"

"Yes; I see through it all. I am no fool. And now, what do you mean?"

Archie was really bewildered. He hardly knew what he was saying.

"It was no trick. You were not deceived."

"Let me see it again."

The woman clapped her hands, and again the fair and beautiful apparition appeared reflected

in the mirror. It moved, it smiled—seemed to smile on the bewildered youth.

"Where is the trick?" asked the woman. Again the figure faded away, and Archie exclaimed:

"Tell me what this all means."

"You thought I was deceiving you. I promised you a revelation, and I have kept my word."

"And you will explain what this means?"
"I can not explain."
"Why not?"
"Because you have deceived me. When you tell me the truth concerning yourself, then I will explain."

Archie, for reasons that our readers can discern, was at a loss how to act.

"I have not deceived you," he said.

"Yes, you have."

"How?"

"Concerning yourself. You have only partly told me the truth. You said you did not remember your father. Your statement is false—you do remember your father."

"My father died when I was a mere infant."

"But you remember him. You did not tell me the truth when you said your name was Brown. I know what your name is, and so do you."

"And do you wish me to confide in you?"

"Yes. And I am glad that you now admit that you deceived me."

"Who are you?"

"It matters not who I am; I hold your secret, and you must give me your full confidence."

The lad did not know what to do. He had received very full instructions from the detective, but his commands did not cover such a wonderful dénouement as he had encountered.

"Let me go now," he said.

"Why do you want to go away?"

"I am sick."

"What has made you sick?"

"All this excitement. I can not bear it."

"What nonsense!"

"I must go away."

"You can not go away."

The youth started back, and said:

"What do you mean?"

"You are a prisoner."

"I have been betrayed?"

"No. You are in the house of a friend. Do you not want to see the vision of the mirror?"

"Let me see her again."

"Not in the mirror. You shall see her face to face; you shall hear her talk—you shall talk to her."

"When shall I see and talk with her?"

"In good time."

"Who is she? Whence comes this wonderful resemblance?"

"Ah, that is my secret."

"Why do you keep it a secret?"

"Because you will not trust me."

Archie was really exercising wonderful self-control. He was, as has been stated, amazed and bewildered, but all his original cuteness had returned. He did not know how to act under all the circumstances.

The wildest speculations were running through his mind, and he desired to see and talk with his great friend, the detective. He discerned that Captain Joyce could, to a certain extent, solve the mystery. He desired to have it solved by one whom he could trust. The revelation was, indeed, a marvelous one.

"Let me go away," he said.

"You can not go."

"I will not stay."

"Oh, yes, you will."

"Be careful. Do not attempt to keep me a prisoner."

The strange woman laughed in a satirical manner as she said:

"You can not go; but you need have no fear."

"I must go; I will go."

"Oh, no, you will not go. And now come, tell me all the truth."

"I have nothing to tell you."

"Then I will put you in a dungeon until you change your mind."

CHAPTER XV.

THERE followed a moment's silence, and then Archie said:

"You pretend to be my friend?"

"I am your friend."

"And yet you threaten to put me in a dungeon?"

"I do, but in your own interest."

"You make a mistake. You do not know me."

"Why should you and I quarrel? Do you not now know that I possess vital secrets that concern you?"

"I only know that you are deceiving me."

"I desire to tell you the truth. I promised you a startling revelation. I have made good my promise, and now I demand that you do not deceive me. I want you to tell me about yourself."

"I will tell you nothing."

"Why not?"

"You are making me the victim of a trick. You tricked me when you got me to come here. You promised I should return in good time. I now desire to go away; I demand that you make good your promise."

"You can not go away."

"I will go."

The lad moved toward the door. He opened it, and as he did so the lady uttered a slight scream. Archie turned quickly, and the next instant he received a blow from some soft substance which, however, came with sufficient force to knock him down, and the door closed. The youth leaped to his feet, and saw the woman laughing at him.

"You may as well make up your mind to stay here."

"I will not stay."

"But you must."

The lad made a rush to one of the windows. He raised it as quick as a flash. He dashed through it and disappeared. The woman ran to the window, and saw the boy running away. He had descended a distance of at least twenty-five feet, and had evidently done so without harm. The woman stood and gazed in amazement. The lad's escape was indeed a remarkable incident, and she muttered:

"How did he do it?"

In the meantime Archie walked off. And we will here state that it was not fear that caused him to get away—it was simply lack of instructions. The moment he reached the ground he took in the bearings, located the house where he had been, and started along quite leisurely. He had not gone far, however, when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and two men sought to grasp him. The youth was taken unawares, but he speedily astonished his would-be captors. He wrenches himself loose from the grasp of the man who had first seized him, and, quick as lightning, he dealt the man a blow that knocked him off his feet. The second man made an effort to seize him, and was thrown on his back, and the lad started and ran away like the wind.

Archie was only sixteen years of age, but he was possessed of a strength that was simply marvelous. He was a gymnast and a contortionist, and up to more tricks than any professional performer who ever appeared in a circus. It was nothing for him to down an ordinary man, and as the two men who had sought to capture him were not looking for any resistance, he had them at a disadvantage, and he downed them and disappeared, as has been described.

The two men recovered their feet, and both gave utterance to an oath.

"Hang the rascal!" cried one.

"That's all right. But what will we say?"

"We'll say we didn't find him."

"That's it. Let's go and have a drink, and kill time."

The two men walked off to find an all-night house, and Archie made his way to the hotel. Captain Joyce was pacing the floor when Archie entered.

"You're back!" cried the detective.

"Here I am."

"And I am glad to see you."

"You weren't around?"

"No. And once again I was beaten."

"How?"

"That woman was prepared for a shadow. She knows more than I deemed possible, but, as you are back safe it's all right. What happened?"

"I've had the greatest night yet."

"Let's hear your story."

"You saw me get into the carriage?"

"Yes. But, my lad, there were two carriages."

"Two of them?"

"Yes; and they were both alike, and took the same course up to a certain point, and then they separated, and there I was beat—I followed the wrong carriage."

"By George!" cried Archie. "That means something."

"Yes, it does."

"That woman knows more than we think."

"She does. But why didn't you indicate?"

"For the best reason in the world—I couldn't."

"How was that?"

"I was chloroformed the instant I entered the carriage."

"By all that's strange, but that woman is a deep one! She didn't want you to learn where you were taken."

"That was the racket; but I know where I was taken, all the same, and I've had a strange experience."

The lad then related all that had happened to him.

The detective listened with the deepest attention, and when the narrative was concluded, he said:

"I suppose it's all right, under all the circumstances; but if I had the head on the house, it would have been better for you to have stayed there and seen it out."

"That's all right, but the mystery of the mirror knocked me out. I was not prepared with instructions."

"That's so."

"I thought you might explain the mirror trick."

The detective was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"I suppose I must open up the whole matter; but this is indeed a most startling *dénouement*."

"You can explain the mystery?"

"I can."

"Uncle Billy, do so," came the request, in an urgent tone.

CHAPTER XVI.

"You saw a vision in the mirror?" said Captain Joyce.

"I did."

"And you were struck by the wonderful resemblance to yourself?"

"Yes."

"The resemblance was positive?"

Archie laughed, and said:

"I'll tell you what my idea is—it was a picture of myself."

"How could you be gazing at a picture of yourself?"

"That is what I have not got on to yet; but it was some sort of a trick."

"I have reason to believe differently."

"You promised to tell me something."

"I will. I think the time has arrived when you should listen to the tale that your father told me."

"Yes; you can tell me all in safety now."

"Your father and I were boys together."

"I know that."

"We were great friends. Your father's real name was Archibald Richmond, and his father bore the same name. Your father was a good-hearted man, but he was a rather odd sort of a fellow, and, contrary to his father's wishes, he joined a circus. He ran away when a mere youth, and in time he became a famous clown. When he ran away from home he changed his name, and under his assumed name became famous.

"One day your father was traveling in a car, and he met a beautiful young lady. He fell in love with her; he followed her to her home, and he finally made her acquaintance. The young lady proved to be an only daughter, and her father was a very wealthy man. My friend—your father—came to love her madly. He won the lady's love, but her father opposed the match. Your father finally persuaded the girl to elope with him. Her father never forgave her, and in due time the truth came out that your father was a circus clown. His wife—your mother—loved him and was faithful to him, and in time she became the mother of two children, a girl and a boy. The girl was born first. Three years after her marriage she died, and my friend, Archie Pentz, was left with two young children."

"As his business called him to all parts of the country, he placed his two children in the care of a good woman, and attended to his business; but three months afterward, before the close of the circus season, and when he was two thousand miles from home, he received a dispatch that his daughter was dead.

"When he returned, he learned all the facts of the child's death."

"Meantime, he learned that his father-in-law

had also died, and that previous to his death he had deeded all his property away, in order that it should never descend to his grandchildren.

"These are the facts up to a certain date; but a few months previous to your father's death, and just a short time before my meeting with him, he received a mysterious intimation that a fraud had been practiced upon him, and that both his children were living. He was too broken up in health to follow the matter—in fact, he hardly believed it true, but he told the story to me."

"Then the vision I saw in the mirror was a reflection of my living sister?"

"I am not certain, Archie; but when you told me about these women seeing a wonderful resemblance in you, a suspicion did run through my mind, and I am now convinced that it is true that your sister is living. I have other suspicions which I will not relate now. I will wait until I make further investigations; but I will say this much: there has been a great fraud practiced somewhere. I have been trying to ferret it out, but thus far I have been baffled, I think now, however, we may get on to it."

"You say it is possible a great fraud has been committed?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"We will not discuss the matter now, but I think that now I am in a way to push on and investigate."

"We must obtain possession of my sister."

"Not yet."

"Why not?"

"We must investigate, in the first place. We must find out who this woman is who evidently has your sister in her care. It is evident that she is not only the custodian of your sister's person, but it would appear that she is connected with the gang of forgers. We will run down the whole matter."

"Why does she want to learn my story from me?"

"Ah! there is something we have not got on to yet. It is possible that until she saw you she believed you dead. There may have been a double fraud perpetrated. The whole matter is at present a dark secret, but you can depend upon me to solve the mystery in the end."

"And what must I do in the meantime?"

"You must lay low."

"Why?"

"I want you to disappear, as far as this woman is concerned, for the present. I will take hold now and run this affair. You have located the house?"

"Yes."

"And that is a big point in our favor. We will both lay low, and I will investigate, and you may rest assured I will get on to something within a few days. I tell you, the fact of locating this woman is rich with probabilities."

"But my sister?"

"We will look out for her. But I want the pedigree of the woman, and I will get it."

"And how can I help?"

"All you can do is to locate the house for me."

"I can do that easily enough."

"Good, my lad! and in a few days we will know something."

"How will you go to work?"

"I will manage to ascertain this woman's pedigree, as I told you. I may manage to have an interview with your sister."

"What is my sister's name?"

"Emily."

"When will you start in?"

"To-night; yes, I will start in at once."

Archie gave our hero the proper directions for finding the house into which he had been inveigled, and the detective said:

"Now I want you to wait here. Do not go out. I will report back ere daylight."

Captain Joyce got himself up for big play, and went forth.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTAIN JOYCE had made certain investigations concerning the grandfather of his little protégé, but he had been too busy to devote all the time to the matter that it required. He had made certain discoveries, however, that caused suspicions to arise in his mind. He had learned Augustus Lamb was a very strange man. He had made large sums in mining operations, and had been very reticent as to his financial standing. There was a mystery attending his death. He had been reported to have been drowned;

but there were rumors following his death that will develop as our narrative progresses.

The detective was satisfied, in his own mind, that there was a large fortune somewhere, and that his little friend Archie was the legitimate heir to the estate, and that there had been some very crooked business. Indeed, the detective had never believed that Emily Richmond was living, but after the adventure of Archie he felt confident that such was the fact.

Captain Joyce proceeded direct to the house where Archie's adventure had transpired. He had little difficulty in finding the place. Archie had taken the bearings well. He found the house to be one of two semi-detached buildings situated in a very good neighborhood.

The detective examined the surroundings thoroughly. The house appeared to be closed for the night. There were no lights, and he stood on his guard when he saw the figure of a woman come from the house. The hour was midnight. She went to a certain corner and waited. Captain Joyce took up a position close to her. He found a favorable hiding-place, and later on circumstances favored him. A man joined the woman. Our hero had detected that she was waiting for some one, and, strangely enough, when the two met they walked to a point close to where the officer lay concealed, and he knew that they would be compelled to talk in a very low tone to avoid his overhearing all that passed between them.

"I see you got my note," said the woman.

"I did, less than an hour ago," came the answer.

"It is fortunate. I have very important news for you."

"Well?"

"The boy lives."

"What boy?"

"Archie Richmond's boy."

"What nonsense!"

"Well, it is true, that's all. I have seen and talked with a youth who bears the most marvelous resemblance to Emily."

"That may be so. I knew the lad was living; but he is a waif. He knows nothing as to his parentage."

"You are mistaken. The lad is well educated, well bred, knows who his father was, undoubtedly knows all about his grandfather, and is backed evidently by some one who knows more than he does. I tell you that you were fooled. The exchange of children never took place. Archie Richmond came into possession of his own child."

"Under what circumstances did you see this boy?"

"It makes no difference; I saw him."

"Why didn't you secure possession of him?"

"I did try to do so."

"And you failed?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"The lad is a wonder; in fact, there is a mystery about him."

"I must see this boy."

"That may be arranged."

"It must be."

"One thing must first be settled."

"Well?"

"You have not given me much money lately."

"I could not."

"Nonsense! You can not deceive me. Do you suppose I do not know how much money you hold?"

"That may be; but at any time I may be called to an account."

"Do you mean to tell me that you have held that estate intact?"

"Yes; and all the legitimate fees that would be coming to me I have surrendered to you."

"And why have you been so careful?"

"Because I feared just what you have revealed to me to-night; and, besides, the girl lives."

"The girl knows nothing. She believes she is my sister. We can dispose of her at any moment."

"Ah, yes; but you have kept her away from me. You have not even let me see her."

"No; and I had good reason not to let you see her."

"Elsie, let me tell you one thing: some day you will get into trouble."

"How?"

"That husband of yours."

"What of him?"

"Sooner or later he will be captured, and you are identified with his gang of criminals."

"That is none of your business."

"No, it is not my business. I am only warning you. You say you have that boy?"
"I did not say I had him under my protection. I said I had seen him."
"You have the girl?"
"Yes."
"If that boy and girl could be finally disposed of, I could make a settlement with you and your husband that would enable him to get out of his present business."

"We may be compelled to get out of our present business. There is a man on our track who may break up the gang; and I will admit I should not be sorry, myself, if he were to succeed and my husband could escape. You know I have been compelled to follow my husband."

"You can shake that man."

"Never! No woman ever loved a man as I love him, and, despite his being a criminal, he has been a true and loyal husband to me."

The detective was getting on to great news, and he fully appreciated the fact.

CHAPTER XVIII.

For a moment the man and woman were silent, but at length the man said:

"Elsie, I have a proposition to make: if you will place the boy and the girl in my possession, I will pay you fifty thousand dollars cash down."

"You have no proof that the girl is in my possession."

"You have admitted it."

"No, I have not actually admitted it. You have assumed that she is in my possession, and I have favored your suspicion. I know where she is. I could put my hand on her any moment, but she has never been in my possession."

"And this boy?"

"I have seen him, that is all."

"Can you prove to me that what you say is true?"

"Within a few days I may give you proof."

"You know how to communicate with me. I will meet you any time you send for me."

"I may send for you within forty-eight hours."

"I will be on hand to meet you."

A few moments later the man and woman separated. Captain Joyce knew where to find the woman. He determined to follow the man, and at the same time he had come to a second and more important determination.

As the woman walked away, the detective came forth from his hiding-place. The man had just departed, but the detective was on his track. He followed him several squares, and when a good chance offered he closed in on him, laid his hand on the man's shoulder, and said:

"Good-night, sir."

The man halted, faced round and fixed his eyes on the officer, and, in an angry tone, said:

"My friend, you have picked up the wrong man."

"I guess not," came the laconic answer.

"What do you want?"

"An explanation."

"Who in thunder are you, anyhow, and how dare you address me?"

The detective turned over the lapel of his coat and displayed a shield.

The man gave a start, and exclaimed:

"You are an officer?"

"Yes, I am an officer."

"And why do you address me?"

"I told you I desired an explanation."

"But you have made a mistake."

"I guess not."

"You certainly have."

"We will see about that. You were talking to a woman a few moments ago?"

"Yes; the woman hailed me and solicited help."

"And did you give her aid?"

"No; I'm not in the habit of bestowing alms on women at such an hour."

"Then you did not know the woman?"

"No."

The detective laughed, and said:

"If you did not know her, why did you address her as Elsie in a very familiar tone?"

The man answered readily:

"I addressed her as Elsie the same way you would call a man Pat or Jack."

"Then you do not know the character of the woman?"

"No."

"I tell you about her."

"I have no desire to know anything about her."

"She is not a woman to ask alms. She is a noted criminal."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, it is possible; and she had business with you."

"How dare you?"

"Oh, I dare easy enough. You know this woman well, and I am under the painful necessity of arresting you."

"On what charge?"

"I think you are connected with the gang."

"What gang?"

"Oh, you know well enough."

"My friend, I have a favor to ask."

"What?"

"I wish you to accompany me to my home."

"Why should I, sir?"

"I will satisfy you as to my identity, and prove to you that you have made a mistake."

"Very well, sir; I am willing to have you prove that I have made a mistake."

The two men proceeded along, and the man said:

"You're shadowing that woman?"

"I am not revealing my business."

"I have reasons for asking you."

"Indeed? Will you state your reasons?"

"That woman sent for me to meet her."

"She did, eh?"

"Yes; she has in her possession very valuable papers that I am seeking to obtain possession of; they are papers concerning a very important litigation."

"Are you a lawyer, sir?"

"I am."

"And may I ask your name?"

The lawyer mentioned a name that caused our hero to start in surprise.

"You see now, sir, that you have made a mistake."

"It is possible; but I am greatly surprised. Why did you not have the woman call at your office?"

"I am compelled to use diplomacy with her. You know the character of the woman, and can understand the situation. But here is my home."

The two had arrived in front of a very elegant residence.

CHAPTER XIX.

DURING the walk to the house, the detective had discovered that the gentleman was a very wily individual.

"I live here," said the man; "and, you see, you have made a great mistake."

"It is possible," answered the detective.

The latter had determined to let the man deceive him, and he was also resolved not to betray the fact that he had overheard any part of the conversation with the woman Elsie.

"If you will call at my office to-morrow, sir, I will explain fully to you my business with that woman."

"Very well, sir; I will call at your office. And I will now bid you good-morning."

The detective walked away, and as he wandered on, he muttered:

"Well, well, this affair is taking a strange turn. I am glad to gain a fortune for my little son, Archie; but I must not forget that it is my duty to close in on this gang. I've picked up considerable news to-night. To-morrow I may get on to more."

Archie could not sleep, and he remained awake to await the return of Captain Joyce; and when the latter appeared, the boy said:

"I suppose you have got on to the whole business?"

"Not at present. To-morrow I may run things down, and then I will tell you what has occurred."

The lad appeared greatly disappointed, and retired.

On the day following the incidents we have detailed, the detective called at the lawyer's office. He did not find the gentleman there, and received a message that Mr. — had been suddenly called out of town. Captain Joyce proceeded to take a view of the house where the woman lived. The house bore every appearance of being closed for the summer. The detective made a great many inquiries about the neighborhood, but failed to obtain any definite information. He learned the name of the lady living in the house, but had reason to suspect that she was known by an assumed one.

As stated, the detective made a thorough study of the place, and finally remarked, as he walked away:

"I will get into that house to-night."

Captain Billy Joyce, after his survey, had not gone far when he became aware that he was being followed.

"All right," he muttered. "Miss, I will give you a good chase. You may get on to my little trick; but I am sure I will know what you mean, and don't you forget it, my fair incognito."

He walked around in different directions, and gave her every opportunity in the world to speak to him, if she so desired; but soon he decided that she did not so desire. She was merely seeking to locate him, and when he got tired of the chase he quietly dropped her out; and in good season he returned to his hotel, where he found his impatient little protégé awaiting him.

"Nothing to report yet, my son," he said.

"Let me go out and work a little," said Archie.

"No; I have the affair in hand now."

"Let me go to Brooklyn."

"You may get into some scrape."

"You forget," said Archie.

"Well, what do I forget, my lad?"

"You forget that every time I have gone out I have advanced matters a peg or two."

"But these people may have you down now."

"No, sir; and I will have one powerful friend in case I should fall into a trap."

"Who is your friend?"

"The woman who has charge of my sister."

"That is true."

"While you are working one end of the line, I can work the other."

The detective meditated a moment, and then said:

"Will you promise not to take any chances?"

"I will."

"And what is it you wish to do?"

"Shadow down for a little information. I have an idea I can make a big discovery for you."

"In what direction?"

"I can get on to the hiding-place of those platters, I think."

"I have half a mind to let you try it, old man," said the detective.

"You must let me try it."

"And I can depend that you will take no chances?"

"I will not. All I want to do is get some information. I will run down the lines, and you can follow them, as I claim I have done a great deal so far."

"All right. To-night you can make a trip to Brooklyn, and I will depend upon your keeping your word."

"You need not fear. I will look out for myself."

That same night Archie started for Brooklyn, and Captain Joyce set in to investigate the interior of the house he had been shadowing. He reached the place about midnight. He found it bearing the closed and deserted appearance as upon his former visit. There were no lights visible. All seemed quiet, as though the inmates had retired and were soundly sleeping.

During his visit in the day-time the detective had decided upon his mode of entrance, and with due precaution he set to work, and finally succeeded in entering the place. He gained an entrance to the basement, and, after standing awhile and listening, he drew his lantern and flashed the light around. He found everything as one might expect to find things in the lower part of a house, and after a careful survey he started to ascend to the upper floors.

CHAPTER XX.

THE detective reached the parlor floor and found the rooms very handsomely furnished. He was deliberate in his movements, and went about his investigations in a very careful manner, and in due time he ascended to the second floor. All was still. As he stood in the hall, he muttered:

"I fear I am too late; the house appears to be deserted. They must have got on to the shadow, and they have left things open for me."

Billy Joyce stood looking around, when suddenly he saw the reflection of a woman in the mirror. He turned, and a woman confronted him. She held a cocked revolver in her hand, and appeared as cool and collected as though she had entered the room and met a friend awaiting her. An instant the two stared and gazed at each other, and then the woman demanded in a firm tone:

"Who are you, and what are you doing in this house?"

"I thought this was a closed house."

"If you thought it was a closed house, what right had you to enter?"

"I am on the track of a criminal."

"And what has your presence in this house to do with your being on the track of a criminal?"

"I thought I had tracked the man to this house."

"And do you expect me to believe your statement?"

"You certainly can not doubt it."

"I do doubt it. I think you are a thief."

"If you think I am a thief, why do you not send for the police?"

"I have no need for the police; I can protect myself."

"You are in no danger, madame."

"Thank you for that assurance. And now, sir, will you please tell me the truth?"

"If you do not believe my first statement, you will not accept any other I may make."

"Will you sit down, sir?"

"Do you mean it?"

"Certainly."

The detective was taken a little aback, the woman was so cool and undisturbed apparently. He took a seat, and the woman did likewise; but she still held the cocked revolver in her hand.

"This is nice and cozy," she said.

The detective gazed in amazement. Her coolness and nerve, under all the circumstances, were truly remarkable.

"You take matters coolly."

"There is no need to take them otherwise; and of all men in the world, you are the particular man with whom I wish to have a good long talk."

"Well, well!" ejaculated the officer.

"Yes, sir; you came here to see me; I know it. Your story about tracking a criminal is all humbug; and now, sir, will you please open up your business?"

"You think I came here to see you?"

"Yes."

"What makes you think so?"

"As I wish that there shall be perfect frankness between us, I will tell you all. When I answer your questions, I trust you will be equally frank in answering several questions I may desire to propound to you."

"Proceed, madame."

"I am a lonely woman. I have no friends, and I live here by myself. I do not trouble my neighbors, and my neighbors do not trouble me. I go out very little, and spend a great deal of time looking out of my window. To-day I saw a man watching my house, and I said: 'There is a thief taking the bearings. I am to be robbed!' I am no coward, I made up my mind to be prepared for the thief when he came. He came; he is here. But when he gets in my house I make a very singular discovery: the man is not a thief; he is not tracking a thief. He has come here on some secret mission—this is a tour of observation. And now, sir, you see I expected you; and I will add, I am glad you are here. Come, sir, what is your business?"

"Madame, you amaze me!"

"That is no answer to my question. I have been frank with you; I want you to be frank with me."

"Madame, you have assumed a great deal."

"No, sir; I have assumed nothing save what is founded on fact. I know you did not come here to find a thief."

"How do you know you are correct?"

"I've been watching you."

"Watching me?"

"Yes; I've had my eye on you ever since you first entered this house. I have watched you so well I knew you would enter by the basement. I was there to see you enter. At first I thought you were a thief, but later I discovered that you were not. I am a woman of experience. I know how to draw straight conclusions. I saw you enter the parlor and look around. You were not looking for what you might steal; simply taking things in, that's all; and you dare not deny my statements. And again I demand, what is your business here?"

"I do not know as I am at liberty to tell."

"You must tell."

The detective smiled, and said:

"This is an odd interview."

"It is, sir; but you do not answer my question."

"I was sent here, madame," came the answer.

CHAPTER XXI.

During the time the detective had talked with the woman he had had an opportunity of studying her face. She was a good-looking woman; indeed, she might be considered by many a very handsome woman. Her eyes were large and expressive, her complexion good, and her features delicate; and, besides, there was a look of great intelligence crowning her countenance.

As the detective studied her face he was confronted by an enigma. She did not look like a bad woman. She was under thirty, and there was an air of general refinement about her.

"You were sent here?" she said, after a moment's meditation.

"Yes, I was sent here."

"By whom?"

"I reckon I can not tell. You may be able to guess."

"I am not a good guesser."

"I thought you would guess at once."

"Suppose I make a guess?"

"Well?"

"Will you tell me if I am correct?"

"I can not."

"Why not?"

"I am under a promise of secrecy."

"How will I know if I guess correctly?"

"That you must decide. But I have been frank, madame."

"No, sir, you have not frank."

"You asked me how it is I am here."

"I did."

"I tell you I was sent here."

"But I ask you who sent you?"

"That is another question."

"One you must answer."

"I do not think there is any 'must' about it, madame."

"Yes, you *must* answer."

The lady laid particular emphasis upon the word "must."

"When one says 'must' so decidedly, one must have grounds for one's confidence."

"Yes, sir."

"What are your grounds?"

"You will learn later on, if you refuse to answer."

"I must refuse, madame."

The detective put a particular emphasis upon his use of the word "must."

There followed a moment's silence, broken by the woman, who said:

"If you will not tell me who sent you here, will you tell me for what purpose you were sent?"

"I can not tell you that, but I may aid you to guess."

"Do so."

"I will ask you a question."

"Do so."

"Have you a young lady living here with you—a young miss?"

"No; I have no young miss staying here with me. Why do you ask that question?"

"I was sent here by a party who suspects that you have a certain young lady under your charge."

There came a bright flash to the woman's eyes. The detective was indeed playing a deep and skillful game.

"Will you tell me who the party is, sir?"

"Madame, I will."

"Do so, sir."

"A party engaged me to secure certain information for him. He was singularly reticent as to his reasons for desiring the information; but he is prepared to pay for it. Not knowing but one side of the matter, I engaged to secure for him what information I could."

"And what is the information he desires?"

"I have intimated, I think."

"That will not do. Tell me plainly."

"The party wishes to obtain information as to the whereabouts of a certain young miss."

"And he thinks a certain young miss is in this house?"

"Yes."

"Suppose you had found the young miss here?"

"She may be here."

"Well, put it that way. Suppose she is here?"

The detective made no answer.

"Come, sir, you have been but partly free to communicate. Speak plainly."

"I can not answer you."

"Why not?"

The detective pretended to meditate, and finally said:

"Madame, I will be perfectly frank with you."

"Thank you."

"My summons to act in this case came under very peculiar circumstances. At first I determined not to act in the matter, and then a suspicion crossed my mind, and I reconsidered my first resolve."

"And what was your motive?"

"My suspicions were aroused."

"Against whom, pray?"

"The man who employed me."

"What are your suspicions?"

The officer again pretended to meditate, and then said:

"I did not like the aspect of the affair; I did not like his secrecy; I did not like his commands."

"What were his commands?"

"His commands were for me to seize the child if I found her."

"And what were you to do with her?"

"Commit her to his charge."

The woman fixed her eyes upon the detective, and for fully a minute, she subjected him to a keen and searching gaze; at length she said:

"And you have decided to obey your orders?"

"No."

"What is your decision?"

"I have determined to find out the man's game, if possible."

The detective had fired a great shot.

CHAPTER XXII.

There followed a full minute's silence. The woman appeared to know that she was treading on very dangerous ground. When she spoke it was with her eyes still fixed upon the detective.

"Then you suspect he has a game?" she said.

"Yes."

"What leads you to the suspicion?"

"His order was a strange one; his secrecy is strange; indeed, it was after I suspected that he had a game that I consented to undertake the job."

"Then you resolved to further his game?"

"No."

"What is your intention?"

"I am feeling my way."

"What do you mean?"

"I will not become a party to any deep-laid conspiracy."

"And do you think this man is carrying out a conspiracy?"

"It is possible."

"And this man informed you that you would find the girl here?"

"No."

The woman started, but asked:

"Then why did you come here?"

"The man told me he desired to discover the whereabouts of the girl mentioned. He could give me no positive information. I asked him many questions; he was careful in his answers, but I secured, without his knowledge, certain clews. I worked up the case, and I was engaged in working it up when I came here."

"It is strange you should come here to find the girl."

"No, it is not strange."

"Then the man gave you a suggestion?"

"Not knowingly."

"And you are determined to find this girl?"

"I may find her."

"The girl is not here; but I will admit I think I know of the existence of the girl whom you have been employed to find."

"Is there any reason for her whereabouts being concealed?"

"Yes, from that man."

"Which man?"

"The man who employed you."

"Who is the man who employed me?"

"I certainly do not know, as you have refused to tell me; but any man who seeks that girl has a wicked purpose."

"You suspect his purpose?"

"I suspect that he will never find her, and you had better give over the chase and save time."

"You do not know the man who employed me?"

"No."

"I've been trailing that man."

"Well?"

"I saw him talking with you, and that is why I trailed you."

"Your shadow of me will bring you no results, simply because the girl is not under my protection."

"Madame, you strengthen my resolve."
"What resolve, sir?"
"My resolve to find that girl."
"How is it I strengthen your resolve?"
"I begin to feel certain that there really is a game. I tell you I will find that girl."
"Very well, sir; I certainly can not prevent you from seeking to find her."
"I will find her."
"Well, how does it concern me what you do?"

"I am certain it does concern you."
Again the woman smiled, and said:
"You are an odd sort of a man."
"I am an odd sort of a man; yes, madame, a very peculiar man; and now; I've something to tell you, it will be well for you if you make a friend or me."
The woman laughed outright.
"Why do you laugh, madame?"
"Because what you say is laughable."
"Let me tell you something."
"Go on. You are a very interesting man."
"I have something very interesting to tell you."
"Proceed."

"Sometimes, when we start in to investigate one thing, we fall into other startling discoveries."

"Well?"
"I have made some very startling discoveries."
The woman turned a little pale, and asked:
"What have you discovered?"
"I have discovered that you are a married woman, and do not lead the lonely life you claim to lead."

Again the woman laughed.
"My last statement you consider laughable?"
"Yes—very."
"I will go on and amuse you."
"Pray do."

"I have established the identity of your husband."

The woman did not laugh, and the officer said, as there came a strange light in her eyes:

"You are more interested than amused now, I see."

"I am."
"I know your husband's business; I know his associations; I know that the police are looking for him. How is that? Why do you not laugh now?"

"Your statements are ridiculous."
"Then why are you so pale?"

"Your audacity is appalling. That is why I am so pale."

"Come, come, madame; we begin to understand each other."

"Do we? I do not understand you at all."

"You do; and it will be better for you if you just open up and reveal to me the whole business."

"What whole business?"
"The business as concerns the girl you have concealed in this house."

"I have no girl concealed in this house. If you think so, you have permission to search."

"I certainly mean to search," came the answer.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THERE was a glitter in the woman's eyes as she said:

"There is something strange about all this. You are a bold man, and you are evidently acting in concert with some other bold, bad man. And now, let me tell you something: I have humored you, and permitted you to run on with your nonsense. I will now speak plainly. All you have said is a mystery to me. There is no girl in this house. I know nothing about any girl. I have no husband; and, in short, you are laboring under a great mistake."

"I have struck the wrong house, you mean?"
"The wrong house and the wrong party; and I would now recommend that you go off about your business, and trouble me no more. You are a rogue or a lunatic; but, under either circumstance, you shall not annoy me."

"I warn you, madame."
"In other words, you threaten me?"
"Take it that way if you choose."
"I now warn you, sir—I warn you to leave this house. And you may think yourself fortunate that I have not sent for the police."
"You can do so now, if you choose."
"No, sir; I do not consider it necessary. My servants can protect me; and I advise you to clear out, or I will summon them; and I will

not be responsible for the treatment you may receive at their hands."

"I will tell you a better scheme."
"I have listened to your suggestions long enough."

"You may need a friend."
"When I do, I will have friends of my own choosing. I certainly shall not make a friend of a man who has forced himself into my house and visited me with all manner of impertinence."

"You said I should have your permission to search this house."

"I have changed my mind."
"What led you to change your mind?"

"Your impudence when you told me you had already determined to search my house. I recall the consent I granted."

"I shall search your house, all the same."

The detective rose from his seat. The woman clapped her hands, and three men entered the room. They looked like servants, and our hero detected at a glance that they were three determined rascals. The men stood as though awaiting a command, and the woman said:

"Will you leave, sir, or shall I have you ejected?"

"I reckon you had better have me ejected, madame."

The officer spoke in a cool, unconcerned manner:

"If you are roughly used, it will be your own fault."

"All right, madame; and if your friends are roughly used, it will be your fault, as I take it they will not act without your command."

The woman motioned to the three men to leave the room, saying:

"I will listen to what this man has to say."

The men retired without a word, and once again our hero and the woman were alone, and she said:

"You now see I am prepared to deal with you."

"Yes, madame; and I came here prepared to deal with you."

"Will you tell me plainly your purpose?"

"I have told you my purpose."

"I do not recall the information."

"I am searching for a young lady."

"What is the young lady's name?"

"Her name is Emily Richmond."

"Now, what are the circumstances connected with the young lady?"

"That is what I am seeking to discover."

"Who are you, sir?"

"It does not matter."

"You wish to search this house?"

"I do."

"Proceed. I give you permission."

The detective smiled.

"I have changed my mind."

"What caused you to change your mind?"

"Your willingness, madame. I am no fool; but it's all right."

"What is all right?"

"I will find the girl."

"It is possible that at some future time I may desire to have a talk with you."

"I will be at your service, madame."

"Where will I find you?"

"I will be on hand."

"But will you not furnish me your address?"

"I have no address in New York; I am a bird of passage."

"But I may have a very important communication to make."

"When you have such a communication to make, all you need do is signal."

"How?"

"Lay a red rose on your breast, and I will appear, like the good geni who attended the great Aladdin."

"You are a strange man."

"Yes, madame, I am. I am so strange a man that you will be wise to make me your friend."

"I do not need a friend."

"You may need one, or your husband may. His needs may be yours."

"I will meet you later on, sir."

"Very well, madame; we'll let it go at that, and I will bid you good-night."

The detective walked toward the door, but turned and said:

"You may never have another opportunity to make me your friend."

"I may never need your friendship, and I certainly shall not seek it until I know more about you. This is all very extraordinary, and I must have time to think."

"You have had plenty of time to think, madame; but good-night."

A few moments later the detective was on the street, and at the same instant the woman was giving orders to an evil-faced man. She said:
"Follow him; he is your deadliest foe!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

BILLY JOYCE had started in to play a very cunning game immediately after the discovery of his presence by the woman. He had not succeeded altogether, but he had made a little progress. He discovered also that the woman was very keen and shrewd. He had not made a search of the house. His experience taught him that such a search would bring no results. The woman was too willing for him to make the investigation, and he was satisfied the girl had been removed.

"It's all right," he muttered; "the girl is safe; I need not bother about her. My game is to trail down those forgers. I have been a long time on this job now without making any decided progress."

The detective, while indulging his soliloquy, had his eyes about him. He knew his peril, and had reason to suspect that the woman did not intend to let him off quietly. He looked for some one to follow him, but did not discover that any one was on his track, and he was about to start for his home when a man advanced toward him. The man staggered as though under the influence of liquor, and as he came opposite to where our hero was walking he suddenly wheeled around, and, facing Captain Joyce, asked:

"Can you tell me where I am, stranger?"

"In your boots, I reckon."

The man laughed in a maudlin sort of way, and answered:

"That ain't so, stranger; I don't wear boots. But will you tell me where I want to go?"

"I reckon you know that better than I do."

"Don't put on airs, stranger. I am a bad man."

"You appear to be fooling with me."

"How?"

"It's an odd question to ask a stranger as to where you want to go."

Again the man laughed in a maudlin manner, and said:

"You're right."

While talking to the fellow, the detective had made a discovery, and a weird suspicion ran through his mind. Our hero was always ready to take chances and enter upon any sort of an adventure, and he said:

"If you will tell me where you want to go, I may aid you in finding the place; but I'll give you a tip."

"Go it."

"You want to lay low."

"What do you mean?"

"Some one may get on to your identity."

"Who are you?"

"I've been there."

"You have?"

"I'm under your cover now."

"You are?"

"I am."

"Let's take a look at you. Come over here by the light."

The detective moved over under a gas-light, and the man scanned his features, and, after a moment, said:

"I don't recognize you."

"That's all right. I recognize you."

"See here, stranger, you have the best of me."

"That's so."

"I don't like it."

"I can't help that."

"But you can take that!"

Quick as lightning the man made a lunge with a dagger. It was intended to be a fatal thrust. It was aimed at the heart, but our hero was on his guard. He had been there before, and he avoided the thrust, and, throwing out his foot, he struck the man on the chest, and he went over as though he had been a brick set on end. As he fell, the detective kicked the knife from his grasp and secured it; and, as the man rose, a pistol was clapped to his head, and Billy Joyce said:

"Don't move or make an outcry, or you are a dead man!"

The man did not move. He appeared as though paralyzed. As quick as a flash our hero went through him, and drew from his clothing a pair of pistols and several other articles of a very suspicious character. Having disarmed the man, Billy said:

"Now, my friend, I reckon you will be docile."

"You're a good 'un," said the man.

"Now tell me, Mister Man, why did you go for me?"

"I reckon you can guess."

"I am no guesser."

"Well, you guessed one thing all right."

"What did I guess right?"

"You guessed I was under cover."

"That wasn't a guess."

"So I thought, and that is the reason I went for you. I did not want a man running around here who had got on to my identity."

"It was easy for me to get on to your identity."

"How is that?"

"I was looking for you."

"You puzzle me."

"I know who sent you to look for me."

"That's queer."

"Not at all. She is a smart woman, but not smart enough for me. She is evidently too much for you."

The man appeared to think a moment, and then said:

"See here, stranger, you and I may come to an understanding."

"I think we can," was the answer.

CHAPTER XXV.

"You say a woman set me on your track?"

"That is what I said."

"And how is it you know this woman set me on your track?"

"I had some business with that woman."

"What was your business?"

"It doesn't matter now; but she made a mistake."

"How?"

"She couldn't take in my errand."

"Women ain't quick, you know."

"She appears to be a pretty quick woman; but she made a mistake this time."

"Possibly I can rectify the mistake."

"Possibly you can."

"I will if I can. Give me a chance. What did you want the woman to understand?"

"I'll tell you plain out."

"Go it."

"You said you were a bad man?"

"Yes."

"So am I; that's how I came to go and see the woman."

"I don't catch on."

"Because I am a bad man, a certain high-toned gentleman has secured my services. Now, I've an idea that he is a bad man, too, and I thought I'd get in and beat him, but the woman wouldn't give me her confidence. She shut me clean out, and I guess I'll have to play against her."

"Well, you see, she had to be cautious."

"But she might have known I was one of the gang. Didn't I give her to understand I knew you?"

"Who am I?"

"That's all right, Brower; you know I've got you down. I'd have no occasion to squeal. If I wanted to squeal, I've all the points. No, I wanted to get on to the real facts of the case, and then turn to and help make a big pile. There's money in the business, I know. The woman shut me out, however, as I told you, and now I've got to go it alone or play in with the big 'un."

The man appeared to meditate, but at length said:

"Say, mister, don't go off and break things just yet."

"What else can I do?"

"I will see you again."

"When?"

"To-morrow night."

"Where?"

The man named a place of meeting. Our hero knew the place well. It was a thieves' resort, located in one of the worst sections of the city; indeed, it was worth a man's life to visit that quarter after nightfall; but Captain Joyce said:

"I will meet you."

"At what hour?"

"You can name the hour."

"Make it midnight."

"All right."

"You will be there?"

"I will."

"And you won't move until you see me again?"

"No."

"I'll take your word, and when next we

meet, we may come to a more perfect understanding."

"If we do, you will make the woman take a long fall."

"Leave that to me."

"Good night," said Joyce; and the two men separated.

As our hero walked off, he muttered:

"I may get on to something yet. I've fooled the man Brower; but how about the woman? She may be too smart for me yet."

The detective proceeded to his hotel, which he reached without further accident, and a disagreeable situation confronted him. In the meantime, the man Brower walked off, and he also indulged in a little soliloquy. He muttered:

"I don't understand this business. I had a close call. That fellow might have downed me; and one thing is certain: there is a mystery somewhere."

The man returned direct to the house where our hero had held the odd interview with the woman Elsie. The woman appeared to await his coming, and when he entered her presence he found her sitting on a sofa, and her face was as pale as one dead.

"You are back?"

"Yes, I am here."

"What did you accomplish?"

"I had a narrow escape."

"How?"

"I made a dash to lay out that man."

"Well?"

"He was too much for me—was as cool as a cucumber. I've my opinion."

"What is your opinion?"

"You are away off on that man."

"How?"

"He's one of us."

The woman smiled grimly, and the man related all that had occurred. The woman listened until he had concluded, and then said:

"He has fooled you."

"Fooled me?"

"Yes."

"I fear, my dear, you are fooling yourself."

"Andy Brower, I've a proposition to make."

"You are always making propositions, my dear."

"It is an important proposition I have to make now."

"Name it."

"We must get away from here."

"Just when we are on the eve of making a fortune?"

"You will be trapped."

"By whom?"

"That man you met to-night."

"Woman, you are away off."

"No, I am not; that man is playing you, and is only waiting for a good chance to close in on you."

"What nonsense! If he wanted to close in on me, he had his chance to-night. No, Elsie, you are mistaken."

"Andy, listen to me: follow my advice, act according to it, and we will be all right. We have got a sure fortune in our hands. It is only a question of time, and we can get the fortune without running any risks, and it will come when you are out of your present snarl."

"Woman, you are crazy!"

"Fool! Do you know the man you are dealing with?"

"No."

"I'll tell you: it's Billy Joyce!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN the woman mentioned the name of Billy Joyce, the man Brower gave a start, and ejaculated:

"What is it you say?"

"The man you are fooling with is Billy Joyce, the great detective."

"What nonsense!"

"I've been thinking this whole thing out, and in some mysterious manner he is our *bête noire*. He appears to be our evil genius. He is across our track in two ways, and there is but one way out of the business."

"It can't be possible that you are right."

"I am right."

"How did you get on to it?"

"We will not discuss that part of it; but I tell you it's our game to get away."

"If he were out of the way, we would be all right?"

"Yes."

"That's the way I take it."

"Let me tell you one thing, Andy Brower—you will not get that man out of the way."

"Yes, I will."

"I warn you against any attempt. You tried it to-night."

"I did not know my man."

"It would not have helped you if you had known your man."

"Yes, it would."

"How?"

"I should have gone for him another way. But it's all right now."

"Andy, but one plan remains to us now."

"And what is your plan?"

"We must leave, or at any moment that man may close in on you."

"Why is he holding back?"

"He is hunting up evidence."

"How?"

"He is laying back to light on to those plates and he has another scheme on hand now."

"What is his other scheme?"

"He holds under his care the real heir to old Lamb's millions, and I tell you matters look blue for us. We have a little money. We can go to Europe and rest and lay low, and in a few years we can come back; and if one scheme fails we can work the other."

"What will we gain if we go to Europe?"

"We will gain everything."

"That man will follow us."

"He may."

"And where will we be then?"

"We can keep moving."

"He will move after us."

"That is so; but we may strike a chance."

"What sort of a chance?"

"A chance to strike him out."

"We can do better, my dear."

"How?"

"I am to meet the man to-morrow night."

"Well?"

"I will down him."

"Suppose you fail?"

"I will not fail. We will make the fight here. If I down him—and I will—we will have the game all in our own hands."

"How?"

"You say he has the heir under his care. We will secure possession of the heir."

"A good scheme, if it were possible to carry it out; but the chances are too risky against us. No; we have a sure thing if we hold on to the girl. We will win in the end, and, you know, at all hazards we will secure one half of the wealth, and that will not be bad to take."

"That man will always be on our track."

"A few years from now we will have thrown everything off."

"It won't do, Elsie. I'm going to down that man to-morrow night."

"He may down you."

"I must take the chance."

"You take a big chance. You had better listen now to my plans in detail."

"No harm in listening to your plans. What are they?"

"Let us make all our arrangements to flee across the Atlantic; we will lay low and watch our chance. We may work a scheme to get possession of the lad. If we do, we are all right; we silently steal away, taking him with us. I tell you I've enough money for us to lay low safe for a few years. You know I've always been opposed to this plate business. I never knew it to win; there is too much capital against you; too many men can be put on your track. It never did succeed; it never will. Why do you stick to the scheme like a madman?"

"For once the record shall be broken."

"You never will break the record; forgery is always a failure; it always will be as long as forgery is a crime."

"I will see what to-morrow night brings forth."

"You will not let me persuade you?"

"No."

"Then, do not attempt to do the deed yourself."

"I will not; I've a good scheme."

"I again warn you it will fail. You can make up your mind that when that man goes to meet you to-morrow night, he will be ready for you. He will have all his arrangements fixed."

"I will know all about that before I attempt to strike."

"I am sorry I can not persuade you, and I trust you will come out all right."

"I will come out all right, never fear."

A few moments later the man Brower left the house. It was well on toward daylight, and as he walked away he muttered.

"I will make arrangements that can not fail to bring about a sure result in my favor." And, indeed, the fellow was plotting a cunning scheme.

CHAPTER XXVII.

As our readers will remember, Captain Joyce returned to the hotel. It was well on toward morning when he reached it, and he entered his apartments expecting to find Archie awaiting him, but the lad was not present.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the detective, "the lad has not returned."

Our hero went to sleep, however, expecting the lad would show up later on, and it was fully eight o'clock in the morning when he awoke and looked into Archie's room.

The lad was not there, nor had his bed been disturbed. The great detective became quite uneasy, and he muttered: "Something must have happened the lad. I feared it, and I should not have consented to his going."

When Archie started for Brooklyn, he had made up his mind to make a big ten-strike, as he expressed it. The lad had done considerable thinking. He knew the detective was anxious to close in on the forgers, and he knew also that it was his great purpose to recover the plates from which the forged Treasury notes were printed.

The youth reached Brooklyn without having encountered any adventure worthy of record, and he proceeded direct to the little old house where he had been a listener to the talk of the forgers upon a former occasion. He discovered that some of the men were in the old house. He had once gained admission, and he determined to attempt a second entrance. He succeeded, having entered as upon the former occasion, and in due time he descended the stairs and took up a position near the door of the room where he had previously listened. There were four men in the room; three of them were the same fellows he had seen before, and the fourth was an evil-faced fellow whom he had not seen upon his former visit. As he listened he congratulated himself, for the very first words that fell upon his ear were an important revelation. One of the men said:

"I tell you, pards, it's time for us to act, or we're done for, that's all."

"But what shall we do?" demanded one of the men.

"We must move the plates to some other city."

"But why is there such great need to act at once?"

"I tell you something is going to happen."

"What makes you think so?"

"I hardly like to speak."

"Tell all, or shut up," came the suggestion.

"You fellows may not agree with me."

"All right if we don't."

"You won't give me away?"

"Certainly not."

"You know I speak in the common interest?"

"Certainly."

Archie could overhear every word that was said.

"Well, to tell the truth, pards, there is too much woman in our affairs."

"Don't talk in riddles."

"I won't."

"Then speak right out."

"Brower's wife knows too much."

There followed a moment's silence, and then one of the others said:

"I believe you are right."

"She has some outside scheme on hand."

"That is so."

"She is against us, anyway, in her heart."

"I believe that," said one of the men.

"She wants to get Brower out of the business."

"That is true."

"She has got certain information."

"What is the news she possesses?"

"I don't know exactly, but it's my idea she knows there is to be a pull. She thinks the game is against us, and, in my opinion, I ought to speak right out."

"That's what we want you to do."

"She is ready to squeal, in order to save her husband."

There followed a dead silence. The four men gazed into one another's faces. The statement made by one of their number was a very serious one. The silence was at length broken by the man who was offering the startling suggestions. He said:

"You must remember that woman is on to the whole business."

"That is so," came the answer.

"She knows everything."

"She does."

"The fellows who are on our track would make any terms with one or two of us in order to get those plates."

"That's so."

"Then you see what I mean."

"What do you mean?"

"In plain language, I believe that woman is playing a deep game."

"What is her game?"

"She is negotiating."

"With whom?"

"With the fellows who are trying to run us down."

Again there followed a silence, broken in turn by one of the men, who asked:

"Is Brower working in with her?"

"No."

"You appear to have things pretty straight."

"I think I have."

"How did you get on to it?"

"I've been watching that woman."

"On what lay?"

"I've suspected her for some time. I've been much in her company, and I've been running a little shadow on my own account, and I've seen her hold several night interviews with a man whose looks I don't like, and within twenty-four hours she's met another man. One of the men I think I know."

"Who is he?"

"Well, I am not certain; I only suspect. But if I am right, I tell you a big game is going on against us."

"(By ginger!" muttered Archie, "it's lucky I am here!)"

"Who is the man?" came the question, and an instant later the answer came:

"If I am right, the man is that devil Joyce!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE mention of the name of Joyce caused the men to start, and there came a wild glare in their eyes. They knew that the captain was a stayer, that he was deep, one of those mysterious detectives who move like shadows, always behind you and always present.

After an interval of silence, one of the men said:

"If this woman is laying in with Joyce, we're gone coons, that's all."

"Not quite, if we move."

"What can we do?"

"Let us remove the plates, and she can not give the information; we can make a fool of her."

"Would it not be well to consult with Brower?"

"No."

During the whole of the above dialogue, as recorded, the evil-faced man had taken no part, but finally one of the men appealed to him directly, and asked:

"What do you think about it, Gussie?"

"I think we should move the plates. Why should we let a woman give us all away?"

"But there may be a mistake."

"You fellows know I've never liked the idea of that woman's knowing so much of our affairs. Brower is all right, but I've always been afraid of his wife."

"She has done us many good turns, you know. She is a very smart woman."

"That is true. But when she did us the good turns it was always in the interest of Brower. She never did like us, and, in my opinion, it's two to one she is prepared to give us dead away. I say it is our best course to get away with the plates."

"Brower may be awful mad."

"We can not help that."

"If we move them, when shall we do it?"

"To-night."

"Where shall we take them?"

"Ahl! that is the question."

"I've an idea," said one of the men.

"Speak it out, pard."

"There is a tomb in the cemetery."

"Well?"

"We can hide them in there."

"I've an idea," suggested another.

"Go it."

"We can dig a grave and bury them in the cemetery."

"The grave would be discovered. The men running the cemetery have maps, and know every inch of ground within the place. But

there is one thing we can do; we can rout a body out, or bury the plates on top of some coffin."

"That would be risky," said one of the men.

"How so?"

"They would be able to know that the grave had been opened. We must take no chance."

"But the cemetery is a good place to hide the plates in."

"That is so, and I knew what I was about when I first spoke. There is a vault there that has been closed and sealed forever, as they say. We can open it, put in our plates, and they will lay safe until resurrection day, unless we open it and take them out ourselves; and, what is more, only us four will know where they are hidden. Too many know now."

"By ginger!" again muttered Archie, "but I always seem to strike it right."

It did appear as though the adventurous youth was in great luck. He had overheard every word that had passed between the men, and he understood the full significance of all he had overheard.

The men held some further consultation, and at length it was agreed that they should make the removal of the plates.

In the first place, they took a fearful oath between themselves never to divulge the secret, save with the consent of at least three of their number assembled. The oath was taken, and it was a terrible ceremony that the little fellow Archie witnessed. The men opened each a vein in his arm, and mixed the blood together; then each man crossed his forehead with the mixture composed of the mingled blood, and then they took hold of one another's hands and formed a circle; and while thus they stood with clasped hands they repeated the words of their oath; and to all this the lad was a witness. His blood ran cold, but he watched, for he knew he had a great game in his hands.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HAVING taken the oath, the men resumed their seats, and the one who had first made the proposition to move the plates, said:

"Now, then, boys, I'm satisfied we are making the right move, and I have a still further plan to offer as soon as the plates are moved. It will stand us in hand to break and clear away."

"How about the other fellows?"

"Brower has the other fellows with him. He may kick like a steer. If he does, there will be war."

The evil-faced man said:

"I have a plan to offer. We will say nothing about what we have done. We will keep matters quiet, and wait awhile and watch. If we find out that the woman is going back on us, we will be justified. If we find out that, everything is all right, we can let the boys all into the scheme and discuss our plan in open meeting. But I tell you the thing has a bad look at present. I have watched Brower's wife, and I've overheard several conversations between them. She is urging him to desert the gang. I know she has some other scheme on hand. I could give her some information in her other affair, but she has never consulted me, so I am silent."

"Pards, do not forget we are to move the plates."

"That is so. When shall we start in?"

"About midnight."

One of the men pulled out his watch, and said:

"It's midnight now."

"Then, let's get to work."

"How about opening the vault?"

"We can do that easy enough. I've opened it already. I was prepared for this little change."

"How far will we have to carry them?"

"Less than half a mile. It's only the dies we will move."

"And where are they?"

"They have not been disturbed."

"They are buried in the cellar."

"Yes."

"Let's get to work."

The men rose, and Archie was compelled to steal away; and the question was, where should he go? He desired to watch the men, but he well knew his peril; yes, he knew that discovery meant certain death for him. He darted along the broad hall and stole into the kitchen, and he was just in time; for he heard the men pass from the front room, and saw them go along the hall to the door that opened on the cellar stairs.

The lad had not completed his game; but he felt just as happy as though he were sitting opposite Captain Joyce and relating to him his adventures and the glorious results.

When the men passed to the cellar, the lad had a moment's time to think, and he decided upon his course. He muttered:

"No need for me to take extra chances. The men are after the dies; they will secure them and start for the cemetery, and all I have to do is follow them, note the place, and skip to New York."

The men were down in the cellar fully half an hour; but at length the lad heard them ascend to the hall.

He had but an instant to decide upon his course. He found a pantry, and into it he darted, and the next instant he heard steps in the room. Two men entered. They went to the kitchen pump, and one of them remarked:

"We may be doing just right, but I tell you there is a chance that we are getting into trouble."

"How can we get into trouble?"

"In moving those things we are violating our general oath, and you know what a violation means."

"You forget the emergency clause of the oath."

"Does it cover this case?"

"Yes."

"But could we not have consulted some of the others of the gang?"

"No need."

"Why not?"

"The danger is really imminent. Suppose that woman has given things away? We do not know at what moment the officers may show up; and there is one thing you appear to forget."

"Speak it out."

"If they had those plates, they would close in on us so fast we'd never know what hit us."

"I hope we are all right; but one thing you must remember: Brower believes in his wife, and if he should take a stand against us, he would secure a vote that we had violated our oaths, and then 'good-bye, sweetheart,' to us."

"Brower will be mighty quiet."

"Why do you think so?"

"He knows more about his wife's treachery than we do; that's my idea."

"You appear to be against Brower."

"I am not. I am against his wife, because I know she's against us. She has proposed to him already to give things away, take the reward, and skip."

"But that would mean certain death for him."

"Yes; and, woman-like, she does not think of that."

The two men left the room, and Archie breathed more freely.

CHAPTER XXX.

The lad had got on to a great deal since he had been on the lay. Indeed, he appeared to be fully justifying his confidence in himself when he said: "I always get on to something when I go to Brooklyn."

The lad lay low for a few moments and listened, and then he stepped out from his place of concealment. He stole along the hall to the front room, and saw the men taking a drink from a black bottle.

One of them said:

"We are taking big chances."

The speaker appeared to be the timid one of the quartet.

"We have got to take chances in our trade," was the answer.

"Yes, straight chances; but we are going against the gang."

The man had just uttered the words recorded when there came a step on the floor of the outer porch. The men all started and turned pale, and our little hero felt his heart thump. He dodged back, and saw a figure enter the house by the main door. He discerned that it was the figure of a woman. She entered the room where the men were, and Archie stole back for a peep in the room. A startling tableau was presented. The four men had taken their seats, but their faces were pale. The woman stood gazing at them, and finally she asked:

"What are you men up to, I'd like to know?"

"Nothing, old woman," came the answer.

"I know better."

"What do you know?"

"I know from your looks that something is up. You fellows have some scheme on hand, but I bid you have a care."

"What is the matter with you, Nance?"
"I do not know as anything is the matter with me, but I am here to warn you men."

"Against what?"
"There has been a stranger around this house to-night."

"Talk plain, hang you!"

"I am talking pretty plain."

"What are you getting at?"

"I tell you there has been a stranger around this house."

"How do you know?"

"I've seen the tracks of a stranger in the mud. The foot-prints are plain. They have been recently made."

The men all laughed, and said:

"It's all right, Nance. We know about the strange footsteps. And now, what brings you here?"

"I came to tell you that the steps had been seen."

"We're much obliged, but we know all about the steps."

"You had better take my advice and search this house."

"We have searched."

The men exchanged glances. The fact was, they suspected the old woman had trumped up the story. She was known to be a curious old creature, and she spoke of the steps, as they surmised, only as an excuse to enter the house.

"And you are satisfied?"

"Yes."

"Then I've nothing more to say. I've done my duty."

"Yes, you've done your duty, Nance; you always do your duty."

The woman turned and left the room, and a moment later one of the men exclaimed, with an oath:

"Hang the old hag! she is just mousing around, that's all."

"I don't know about that," said the doubter of the party. "Nancy is a good, true woman; she never wastes words."

"I think we had better act on her advice and make an investigation."

"Oh, nonsense! We're all right. All we want to do is to give her the shake."

One of the men stepped into the hall, and after looking out of the door a moment, he returned and said:

"The road is all clear, and we had better move. We have no time to spare; it is getting along toward the small hours of the morning."

A few moments later the four men left the house. Archie had got to cover, but the moment the men were well out of the way, he followed. He saw them enter the cemetery. He also entered. He saw them proceed to a plot of ground in the center of which stood a monument. He saw them raise a slab, and one after the other descend through an opening, and he muttered:

"It's all right; I am on to their hiding-place. I can give Uncle Bill some news this time that will rejoice his heart."

Archie was too venturesome. He had secured the necessary information. He should have taken his bearings, and have stolen away; but he desired to see more, and he stole along and entered the plot of ground. He crept up to where the slab had been raised. He crawled close to the opening and peeped in, when suddenly he uttered a cry, as an arm was extended. He was seized by the head and drawn down through the opening. He was taken right down, and for a moment he felt that he should die; but, as has been stated, he was all gameless and nerve, and after the first shock his nerve returned, and he had decided upon his plan, as he looked around on the weird sight.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was indeed a weird sight that met the lad's gaze. The four men stood there in the midst of mold and damp. There were coffins in the several niches or receptacles made in the walls. There were one or two caskets ranged along one side of the vault, and all shone grim and horrible under the glare of a lantern which one of the men held in his hands. As their companion dragged Archie down in their midst the men stood and glared. There followed just one minute's silence, and then one of the men demanded, in a trembling voice:

"What have you got here?"

"It's a boy."

"And where did you find him?"

"I found him peeping down the vault open-

ing; I reached out and dragged him down, and here he is to speak for himself."

One of the men advanced close to the lad and looked him over. Archie, as has been intimated, had recovered his nerve, and was as cool as a cucumber.

"Who are you, lad?"

"My name is Tommy."

The lad commenced to sniffl, but he was only playing a part.

"So your name is Tommy?" repeated the man.

"Yes, sir."

"What is your last name?"

"That is my name—Tommy."

"Tommy, what are you doing here?"

"I don't know."

"How did you come here?"

"That man dragged me down here."

"Where did he find you?"

"Up there."

"Where?"

"Up there."

"What were you doing up there?"

"Looking down here."

The men all laughed. The lad's answers were simple, but natural—all very amusing under the circumstances.

"How is it you were up there, looking down here?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Come, why were you up there?"

"I seen a light."

"Where?"

"Down here."

"How did you come to see the light?"

"I don't know."

"That won't do. Come, you must tell us the truth."

"I have told you the truth."

One of the men said, in a low tone:

"What's the use of bothering with the lad? Let's send him up. Give him a good holt and start him."

"But see here," said one of the men.

He pointed to Archie's feet. The lad was in his stocking feet.

"Eh! What does that mean?" demanded the man.

All the men exchanged glances.

"Where are your shoes, my lad?"

"I haven't any shoes."

"Don't you ever wear any shoes?"

"Not when I haven't got any, I don't."

One of the men observed:

"He wears pretty good stockings."

Such was the fact. Archie had removed his shoes, but had not removed his stockings, and he wore a suspiciously fine pair of stockings for a lad who went around without any shoes.

"There is something wrong here," whispered one of the men.

"Let's search him," came the suggestion.

One of the men seized Archie in a strong grip, and the lad knew he was in a bad scrape. The first thing brought forth from his pockets was a mask-lantern. The captor of the prize held it aloft, and asked:

"Halloo! what does this mean?" He turned to the lad and repeated his question.

"I don't know," answered Archie.

"You don't know, eh? Well, you are very conveniently ignorant, I reckon."

The second article extracted was a revolver. The weapon was also held aloft, and then followed the declaration:

"Just look at that, eh! What have we struck?"

Here followed a moment's silence, as several other very suspicious articles were taken from the lad, and Archie thought that his time had come. He wondered what his uncle Bill would do when he failed to return, for the lad had given up all hopes of escape. He made up his mind that he was doomed.

"Boy, you're no fool."

"Yes, I am."

"Well, we will see. Now, come, speak right up, and tell us what all this means."

"Are you policemen?"

"No, we are not policemen."

"What are you?"

"We are grave-diggers."

"Well, I ain't."

"No, you are not; and you must tell us just what you are."

"You won't give me away?"

"No, we won't give you away."

"I am a burglar."

"What!" ejaculated the questioner.

"I am a burglar."

The men all laughed, and one of them said

"He is a stunner, he is!" and he added, speaking to Archie: "Come, lad, you open up now."

"What do you mean?"

"How did you happen to be here?"

"I was laying low."

"What for?"

"A chance."

"What sort of a chance?"

The lad hesitated an instant, and then said:

"I'm a grave-rober, I am."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THERE followed a consultation among the men. Archie could not overhear what was said, as they spoke in low whispers, and had walked over to one corner of the vault. In a few moments, however, his cross-examination was resumed. One of the men said:

"See here, young fellow, you have been up to a game; there is some one behind you, and now you must open up."

"You mean for me to go?"

"Hold on; no more guff. You know what you are about, so do we. Who put you up to follow us here?"

"No one."

"How did you come to follow us?"

"I'll tell you everything."

"That's right; tell us everything."

"I've been robbing graves for a long time; I've picked up heaps."

"See here, I told you, no more of your guff."

"What do you want?"

"I want you to confess."

"I have confessed."

"Do you want to die and stay here?"

"No, I don't."

"You will if you don't confess."

"I have confessed, I tell you."

"You are an arrant little liar! Some one has put you up to come here, and now you tell the whole truth, and do it quick, or you will be put in one of those coffins, on top of what's there already."

"I can't tell you any more."

The man placed a cocked revolver to the lad's temple, and said:

"Come, we're done with your fooling."

Archie felt that he was doomed, as has been intimated, and he felt it a good thing to be shot dead. What he most feared was being left in the vault to slowly starve to death.

"Will you speak or die?"

"I've got nothing to say."

"What you have told us is all false."

"If you don't believe what I said, I can't help it."

"You want to die?"

"No."

"Then confess."

"I've nothing to confess. I knew I would be caught some time."

The men held another consultation in a far corner of the vault.

"What do you think of it?" asked the man who had held the pistol to poor Archie's temple.

"I'll tell you what I think of it," said the doubter.

"Well, what do you think?"

"It's my opinion that lad was in the house. It's my opinion he overheard every word that passed between us while we were consulting over this affair. He followed us here. He is on to the whole business. That is what I think."

The evil-faced man had had very little to say, but at this juncture he said:

"That little rascal must never leave here alive."

"Who do you think he is?"

"I'll tell you what I think of him first. He is as smart as lightning. He knows what he is about every time."

"But who is putting him on?"

"It's my idea that he is some detective's cub. He has been laying low on us all the time. See, he is in his stocking feet. He was in the house. He followed us here. He probably has overheard every word that passed between us. In fact, as matters stand, he's got us dead to rights, if he ever gets away from here alive."

"I don't think he will ever get away from here alive."

"What will you do with him?"

There was a terrible gleam in the man's eyes, who made answer:

"We will leave him here."

"Kill him?"

"No, let him die."

"It's too horrible."

"Bah! if he gets away we are all done up, that's all. We must look out for ourselves; but we ought to find out who is behind him."

"We can."

"I doubt it. He is too smart to talk."

"I've a plan."

"What is it?"

"I'll talk to him first."

The man again approached Archie, and he said:

"Young fellow, we know you."

"You have the best of me."

"Come now, open up."

"I've nothing to say."

"Oh, yes, you have. Now, come, tell us how much you know about what's been going on!"

"I'm silent. I've told you all I can."

"Are you afraid to stay in the dark with the dead?"

Archie well knew the terrible suggestion implied in the question, and he did not answer.

"I see you understand me. I tell you again we can't fool with you, and if you don't make a clean breast of it, we will leave you here and close up the vault."

The boy had a courage that was magnificent, and he answered, in firm tones:

"I have nothing to say."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AGAIN the man consulted with his companions. He said:

"There is but one thing for us to do: leave the lad here."

"It is hard fate for the lad."

"That lad is smarter than most men. He knows his business. We are beat, I fear."

"What will you do with the plates?"

"We can not leave them here."

"Why not?"

"The chances are against us. There is some one behind that lad. We've had a narrow squeak of it, and we had better move at once."

"Can't you force the boy to talk?"

"No."

"And you will leave him here?"

"Yes."

"To die?"

"Yes. Why not? But we can watch the place."

"Why not leave the plates?"

"It won't do."

A very trying ordeal followed for poor Archie, but the lad was not without hope. He knew he was to be left in the vault; but, as stated, even at that terrible moment he was not really hopeless. The man approached him, and said:

"If you open up, we will let you go free. If you refuse, we will bind you and leave you here with the dead."

"I can't help it."

"You won't talk?"

"I've nothing to say."

"All right. Your fate is in your own hands. Speak now, or you will stay here three weeks before this vault is opened again. You will stay here in darkness, alone with the dead."

"I've nothing to say."

"I am not seeking to scare you. I mean business."

"I can not help it."

The man drew a rope from his pocket, and for the first time Archie's courage began to fail. Should the man securely bind him, he felt that indeed all chance for escape would fade away. But he offered no protest. He was resolved to die, if necessary, before he would betray his friend and benefactor.

The man proceeded to tie him securely, and he also tied a handkerchief over his eyes, remarking:

"It won't look so dark if you are blindfolded."

The lad maintained silence.

After he had been securely bound, the men laid him in one corner, and a few moments passed. Our little hero did not know what was going on. He heard them whisper, and soon all was still, and he determined that they had gone. He lay still and listened—lay for fully fifteen minutes—and then he moved. He began to think. His hands were bound, his feet were bound, and the handkerchief was tied about his head. He commenced to roll over and over, and finally rolled himself against a sharp-cornered object. In due time, and with much patient working of his head against the object, he managed to work off the handkerchief. He was in total darkness, but he did not despair. Then he commenced sawing the cords that

bound his wrists. It was a long and tedious process, indeed. He knew it would take him hours to succeed; but at length he did succeed, and his hands were free, and he exclaimed, in a spirit of thankfulness:

"Hurrah!"

Having released his hands, he had little difficulty in untying the cords that bound his feet together; and having succeeded, he rose and stretched himself, and, in quite a cheerful voice, exclaimed:

"Never say die!"

Archie knew he would have a great story to tell his friend and benefactor if he ever succeeded in getting out of that vault, and he had grounds for hope. He was a smart lad, and had prepared himself for all manner of contingencies. He knew the men had carried off his mask-lantern; but he had a little receptacle that they had not discovered when they searched him, and from this receptacle he drew a little candle and a match, and soon he had a tiny light radiating around in the previously dark vault.

"So far, so good," he muttered. "And now we will see."

The lad went to the stairs leading up to the slab that covered the entrance to the vault, and with his candle made a careful examination, and then muttered, in a joyful tone:

"I can do it. And if those fellows have gone away, and are not watching, I will be out of this place before one can say Jack Robinson."

The lad had a little diamond drill, and he set to work in the right spot. He knew just where to bore, and he succeeded, after many hours, in making the requisite number of holes for his purpose. He had drilled clear through the iron cover at one corner and let in a little light, and it was with a brave heart that he sat down to wait for night to come. There were reasons why he did not wish to blow open the cover until after dark, and through his little vent-hole he would be able to tell when night came on.

At length its shadows fell, and the critical moment arrived. The lad fired his charge. His work proved successful, and a few moments later he was above ground.

"Well, I did have a narrow squeak of it, and it was lucky for me that I was prepared for the emergency."

The lad made his way out of the cemetery, succeeded in reaching the ferry, crossed the river, and at eleven o'clock at night appeared at his room in the hotel.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CAPTAIN JOYCE had waited for Archie to turn up; but when the hours passed and he came not, the great detective became seriously alarmed. He waited until midday, and then he went to Brooklyn.

After having got himself a good disguise, he visited the rendezvous of the forgers. He lay around for many hours, and exhausted every device to obtain information, but not a word could he learn tending to solve the fate of his little protégé. Finally he resolved to adopt a desperate remedy. He selected one of the men as the subject for a desperate experiment. He lay round upon the track of this man until he saw him go off alone.

The detective followed, and the man proceeded to the old store-house. The great thief-taker studied the house, and finally determined to enter it. He was walking round and round, taking in the bearings, when suddenly he came upon something that attracted his attention. He saw a little foot-print. He studied it well.

When he saw the man come again from the house, it was late in the afternoon.

The detective was, fortunately, in the rear of the house, and the man walked away without seeing him, and after he had gone, Captain Joyce returned to his investigations. He trailed to the column of the porch the lad had climbed. He looked around, and finally forced an entrance into the house. He passed from room to room, and at length ascended to the second floor; and there, in one of the upper rooms, he made a tell-tale find. He discovered Archie's shoes, which the lad had removed at the time he descended to shadow the men in the front room on the lower floor.

"So far, so good," muttered the detective; and he added: "It is soon time to bring in Carlo."

Captain Joyce left the house, but two hours later returned, and he had with him a peculiar-looking little dog. He led the animal to the house and put him on the foot-prints, and he

gave his dog a command, and the wonderful little animal, as it proved, knew his business well. He ran along, his snout to the ground. He ran straight to the cemetery fence. The detective was full of hope, and he muttered:

"I reckon I will know something ere long."

Captain Joyce passed over the fence and carried his dog with him, and the little animal soon struck the trail again, and once more started off with his sharp little snout to the ground. In due time the great detective was led to the vault in which poor little Archie had been made a prisoner.

"Well, well," muttered the detective, "what does this mean?"

He tried the covering to the vault; it yielded, and he boldly descended and at once he drew his mask-lantern and looked around, and soon he exclaimed:

"Great Scott! but I begin to see through the whole business. It's dollars to cents that the lad was a prisoner here, and has made his escape."

The detective issued forth from the vault, closed it, and started to walk away, when a man approached. The man had seen him, and the detective took no pains to conceal himself. He hoped the man would address him, but he merely passed him after casting on him a glance of keen scrutiny.

The detective walked on, with the remark:

"I will see you later, Mister Mun. I have an idea that I shall desire to interview you, and reckon I will know where to find you."

Captain Joyce made his way to New York, and it was about midnight when he reached the hotel. He walked into his room, and there sat Archie, just as contented as though nothing unusual had happened.

"Well, lad, you are here?"

"Yes, I am here," came the answer, in a jolly tone.

"I thought you were a goner."

"Well, Uncle Billy, I did have a narrow squeak of it."

"You were buried, but you were not dead."

"Eh?" ejaculated Archie, in a tone of surprise.

"What were you doing down in that vault?"

"What do you know about any vault, Uncle Billy?"

"I've just come from there."

"How did you happen to go there?"

"I was looking for you, my lad."

"How did you know that was the place to look for me?"

"We will talk about that later on. Tell me what happened to you."

"I've had a narrow squeak of it."

"So I believe."

"But I came out all right."

"So it would appear."

"And I've got on to something."

"What have you got on to, my lad?"

"I've seen those plates."

"Tell me your story."

The lad related all that had occurred. The detective listened with the greatest interest and attention, and when the lad had concluded, he said:

"You are a wonderful little fellow."

"That's not strange."

"Why not?"

"I've been under your training."

"You beat all my training."

"Good enough. And now I tell you we will run down those plates."

"You are sure they removed them from the vault after having discovered you?"

"Yes, I am sure of that."

"The question is, where did they take them?"

"That is the question; but we are on to them now, and we will find them."

"I don't know about that, my boy."

"We can find them."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THERE came a bright smile over Archie's face as he continued, after the remark with which we concluded the preceding chapter, and he said:

"Yes, I can tell you; but you must first tell me how you happened to learn about the vault."

Captain Joyce told his story, and when he had concluded, Archie said:

"That is just what I thought."

"What did you think?"

"That you had brought Carlo into the case. I tell you, Uncle Billy, once give that dog a smell, and he's immense."

"He is; but how about the plates?"

"Mebbe they carried them back to the old house."

"I hardly think it probable."

"Carlo may be able to smell down to the new hiding place."

"I've thought of that."

"We will find them, that is sure."

"One more thing is sure, Archie."

"Well?"

"I don't let you go alone to work up anything."

"I do not see why you should say that. I've turned right side up with care every time."

"You admit you had a narrow squeak."

"I did; but a miss is as good as a mile."

"We will have time to think matters over."

"Why not act to-night, Uncle Billy?"

"You want to go right at it again?"

"Yes; why not?"

"I've other matters on hand for to-night."

"But you will give those fellows time."

"There is something in that; but you would be worn out, my lad."

"I'm as fresh as a daisy."

The detective looked at his watch, and after a moment, said:

"I must keep an appointment to-night. I am late now; but if I have time, I will go over."

"I'm to go with you?"

"We will wait and see."

The detective had an appointment with the man Brower, and it was this appointment that caused him to suggest the postponement of the journey to Brooklyn.

"There is one thing, Uncle Billy."

"Well?"

"They know that I have given my information to some one."

"That is true."

"Take my advice."

"And what is your advice?"

"Waive everything else and follow up the plates."

Again the detective meditated, and at length said:

"Archie, I will decide this matter within an hour."

"And you may go to Brooklyn?"

"I may."

"Then I must go with you."

"I will decide that also."

"I have a right to go."

"I will fully consider your rights in the matter, Archie," was the answer, and the detective smiled in a good-natured way as he spoke.

Captain Joyce got himself up for a little tour, and started out. He was late, and the chances were that his man had gone away, but he determined to risk the chance. He reached the meeting-place, or, rather, was in its vicinity, when he saw his man; but Brower was not alone, and, as it appeared, the detective was at hand just at the right moment, for he heard the man say to Brower:

"It's lucky I've found you."

From the remark, the detective knew that the two men had just come together.

"What is up?"

"We've been run down."

"Eh?"

"Let's go somewhere, and I will tell you the whole story."

The two men proceeded to a beer-shop. Captain Joyce was well got up to follow anywhere, and a few moments after the two men had entered he also entered the shop. The two men were in a rear room. They sat near an open window.

The detective took in the bearings, and went to the rear yard and got close to the window. His position was a good one for listening. The men were talking in low tones, but the night was still and the detective could overhear quite plainly, and he was just in time to catch on to the thread of the talk.

"You say some one was in the house?"

"Yes."

"Who was it?"

"It was lad, as far as we can discover."

"What do you suppose was the game?"

"There could have been but one game. They are on to the plates, it's my idea."

"Nonsense."

"Can't you see? When they have got us down as close at that, what more do they know?"

"It's all right, Connie; they will not close in."

"So you say, but the boys do not feel so secure."

"We will move the plates."

"That's all right. We have moved them."

"Where have you taken them?"

"I can't tell you, cap."

"You can't tell?" came the exclamation, in an angry tone.

"No."

"What does this mean?"

"See here, cap, I've something confidential to tell you."

"Speak it out."

"I will; but remember, I speak as a friend, and you must take it cool."

"Certainly I will take it cool."

"You must not blame me."

"Certainly not."

"Nor let it be known that I put you on to the thing."

"That's all right."

"I have your word?"

"Yes."

"The boys have a suspicion."

"What is their suspicion?"

"They suspect that some one is making a deal."

"Who?" came the question, in a husky voice.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE man Connie did not make an immediate reply, and when the question was repeated, he said:

"Remember, I am only telling you facts that have come to my knowledge."

"That's all right."

"They say that your wife is working a game."

"Who started this story?"

"I can't tell you. All I know is that it appears to be a general suspicion."

"On what is it founded?"

"They claim your wife has been seen in consultation with several men who are known to be on our track."

"Who saw her have these interviews?"

"I do not know; but it is so asserted, and right following comes this 'dead open and shut' on us."

"What 'dead open and shut'?"

"We were tracked to the place where the plates were hidden."

"And the plates have been removed?"

"Yes."

"And where are they now?"

"I can not tell. The men who removed the plates took an oath. Their present whereabouts can only be revealed in open meeting."

"There is one thing I'll tell you," said Brower, after a moment's thought: "those fellows are away off. My wife is their best friend. She is taking large chances to throw out trailers off the track, and is she to be punished for doing all she can for the boys?"

"You must not harbor any ill-will against me."

"Certainly not, but I want you to know that I propose to move. I will call a meeting, and know where the plates are."

"The boys will demand that you do not reveal to your wife where the plates are."

"We will see about that. I will have a meeting at once. They shall not play any smart business on me."

A few moments later the two men separated, and our hero determined to return to his lodgings and let matters stand over until the succeeding day. He found Archie awaiting his return.

"Are we to go?"

"No, not to-night."

"I think you are putting off a good chance."

"We will be all right very soon. And now you take the rest you need."

Some hours following the incidents we have recorded there was a meeting in the old house. The same party was present that was assembled the night previously when it was decided to move the plates.

"Well, boys," said the man Connie, who had evidently just arrived, "I saw him."

"And what did he say?"

"He was mad."

The man related the conversation that has been recorded as it occurred between Brower and Connie, and when he had concluded, one of the men said:

"Boys, I tell you there is something wrong."

"There is," came a unanimous assent.

"We are liable to have a close-in at any minute."

"Dead sure."

"We must be on our guard."

"We must."

Again there followed a silence, broken in time by one of the men, who said:

"We must stand firm."

"That's sure."

"We must face Brower down for the present."

"Now you talk it up straight," said Connie.

"He may be all right, but one thing is certain, there has been a give-away."

"There has, that's sure."

"Some one trailed us and let that boy out."

"You're right."

"If they trailed us to the vault, they trailed us when we came away."

"You're right."

"And now the question is, what shall we do? We may be under surveillance at this very moment."

"We have searched the house."

"Let's do it again."

The men drew their weapons, and made a thorough search of the house from top to bottom. No one was found, nor any signs of any one, and when they were again assembled in the room, Connie said:

"We must secure the plates to-night."

"You're right. Were shall we take them? That's the question."

"I've an idea," said Connie. "We will take them to the vault."

"That's my idea. You see, they are on to the vault, and they will not expect us to hide them there now, and that is why it is the best thing for us to do."

The men each had an opinion to express, and after full discussion it was decided to be a good scheme to put the plates in the vault, and they carried out the scheme immediately.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN opportunity offered, and Captain Joyce and Archie had a long talk. Archie was very impatient, and wanted the detective to go direct to Brooklyn, but the latter said:

"Keep cool, my son—keep cool."

"You are giving those fellows a chance, Uncle Billy."

There came a strange light in the detective's eyes, as he answered:

"Yes, Archie, I am giving them a chance."

"You have some scheme working, Uncle Billy?"

"Yes, my lad, I have a scheme working."

"And will you go to Brooklyn?"

"Yes, I think so."

"When?"

"I will let you know in good time."

While the above conversation was in progress between Archie and the detective, a very important talk was going on in another direction. The man Brower and the woman Elsie were seated in a room in the house that has been several times described.

"What is your programme, Andy?" asked the woman.

"Things look pretty blue, Elsie."

"I have told you so all along. Yes, I know a terrible man is on our track. It will soon be too late for us to act."

"Do you know, my dear," said the man, "you have excited the suspicion of the boy?"

The woman meditated a moment, and then said:

"They are an ungrateful gang."

"Well, they are no worse than the rest of the world in that respect. Gratitude is not a sentiment that pervades."

"In what direction am I under suspicion?"

"Some one appears to have pretty definite information, and they appear to think that you gave the information. Indeed, they charge that you have been dickering for the surrender of the plates—or, rather, that you will disclose their hiding-place. I tell you matters look very bad for us."

"Andy, I am glad the situation is as it is."

"Why?"

"Now you will see that my advice is good. I tell you I have a great scheme."

"Oh, yes, I know your scheme."

"I have a new one. But first tell me all that has occurred."

The man related all he knew, and when he had concluded, the woman said:

"I will turn our bad fortune into good fortune."

"How will you do it?"

"I am now on to a certain fact."

"Well?"

"The man who is so close on the gang is, as I told you, Captain Joyce."

"Well?"

"In some mysterious manner this Joyce has become the guardian and protector of that boy—Emily's brother."

"If that is so, all your games are up in the air."

"On the contrary, I will take advantage of the fact to carry out my scheme."

"How will you work it?"

"I am accused of having given away the secret of the plates?"

"Yes."

"All right; as I am accused I may as well have the gain. I will betray the secret, and gain the confidence of that man, and in the end I will steal that boy, and we will away."

"But you can not betray the whereabouts of the plates."

"I can't?"

"No; they have removed them to another hiding-place."

"That is bad," said the woman, in a thoughtful tone.

"If it were not true, I would never consent to a betrayal."

"Those men have already turned against you."

"They have not."

"Then you know where the plates are?"

"I do not; but I will know, and, I tell you, soon. I can not and will not reveal the secret to you."

"Do you think they will trust you when they distrust your wife?"

"Yes."

"You are mistaken."

"No, they trust me. And now, let me tell you, their suspicions as concerns you are well grounded; you will admit that, and you will remember they are very smart men; they can not be fooled; they have indulged me a great deal on your account; they have known you were dead against them all the time."

"And who has done them greater service?"

"They think you did the service for me."

"Well, there they are right; but I will win all the same."

"How about Spencer?"

"That man is playing against me."

"You have come to recognize that fact at last, eh?"

"I have known it a long time."

"Suppose he is laying in with the man Joyce?"

"He will never do that."

"But he is against you?"

"He is."

"Then you are done up there, as I said."

"Not quite; I have a hold on that man that he knows nothing about. All I need is to get possession of the boy; let me have him under my care for two weeks, and I will have carried through a scheme that will make us independent for the rest of our lives."

"I am sorry I can not agree with you."

"All right, you go on with your gang, and I will work on my own line."

"If you betray the boys, you will be sorry."

"You need not fear; but wait, I will have something to tell you in a few days."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ON the day following the incidents we have described, Captain Joyce went to Brooklyn. He did not take Archie with him, and, having nothing particular to do, the lad took a stroll. The lad received no instructions, and he concluded to act on his own hook, and naturally he walked over to the house into which he had been carried by the woman Elsie. He had got himself up so that he would not be recognized, and luck favored him; for he had been watching the house but a few moments when he saw the veiled woman step forth.

"By gosh!" he muttered. "Here's a shadow right off. I am going to learn something about that woman."

Archie fell to the woman's trail and followed her down-town. He saw her enter a great office building. He followed her up the stairs, and saw her go into a law-office. He was at his wits' end, however, as he could not overhear what might pass in the office. He looked around. The office was located on the top floor. He actually considered a chance for gaining the roof. He was a tentative fellow, and mechanically tried the door of the office adjoining the one he had seen the woman enter. The door yielded. He pushed it open a little and peeped in. The room was unoccupied, and

he stepped across the threshold, closed the door behind him, and muttered:

"I am in luck."

He removed his shoes, and stepped across the room on tiptoe. As he only wore low shoes, little better than slippers, their removal was an easy matter. He peeped through a key-hole, and saw the woman sitting in a chair. She was alone in the office, but after listening a moment the lad heard her speak to some one in the adjoining chamber. She asked:

"Are you certain Mr. Spencer will visit his office this morning?"

"Yes, madame; he will surely come to the office this morning," was the answer, spoken from within the inner room.

Archie could not remember that he had heard the name of Spencer before, but he felt assured that he was to get on to something important. A few moments passed; a gentleman entered the office. As he did so, Archie saw the woman reveal her face, and the man exclaimed:

"What! you here?"

"Yes, sir, I am here."

"I thought you were to send for me when you desired to see me."

"I preferred to call here and see you."

"Who informed you where you could find me?"

"I have always known where I could find you."

"And now, what can I do for you?"

"You have been trying to do something for me?"

"I do not understand you."

"Oh, no; you are very innocent."

The gentleman said:

"Wait a moment;" and he stepped to the door of the adjoining room, and, addressing some one within there, said:

"You can go, Mr. Jones."

The party addressed entered the main office to get his hat, and Archie saw him. The man passed out. Our little hero had overheard every word that had passed, and was deeply interested.

After the clerk had left the office, the lad heard the man say:

"I sent my clerk off. I do not want any one to overhear what may pass between us."

"That is all right, sir, as far as you are concerned, but I have no motive for secrecy. I am not a party to any crime."

Just at this moment Archie heard a creak in the floor. He turned quickly, and there stood Mr. Jones, the clerk, and the man had caught the boy with his ear to the key-hole of his master's door. The man motioned to Archie to approach him. The lad obeyed.

"What are you doing here?"

"What are you doing here, Mr. Jones?" the lad answered, boldly.

"That matters not. I ask you what you are doing here."

"You had better not press your question," said Archie.

"I think I had better take you down and hand you over to the police."

"Before you do it," said Archie, "you had better go and tell Mr. Spencer you found me here."

"What do you mean?"

"Then Mr. Spencer will know that you stole in here to listen to his talk."

The man looked puzzled.

"I think I will go and tell Mr. Spencer myself."

"Hold on, my lad."

"You are a sly fellow."

"No, no; I thought I heard some one in here, and I just looked in."

"I know better. And now let me tell you something: I came down here with Mr. Spencer. He put me in here—he told me to watch and listen. I know he did not want you to watch and listen. So you had better let him know you are here."

"You will not say anything about my looking into this room?"

"Not if you go away and keep away."

"Certainly I will; but I do not see why Mr. Spencer did not trust me."

As the man spoke he stole out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Archie chuckled, and said:

"That was well done."

The lad certainly had betrayed remarkable quickness and cunning. He had grasped the situation at a glance, and his explanation of his presence was immense; it was reasonable, and

in line with what the man Jones would have good reason to expect. As to after consequences, Archie did not care a snap of his finger if he once got on to some important information. That was all he desired.

After the man had gone out the lad again put his ear to the key-hole, and he heard the man say:

"Your charge is not true."

The lad had not overheard what expression of the woman had called forth the denial, but an instant later he got on to the fact.

"Do you mean to tell me," the woman asked, "that you did not employ a man to enter my house?"

"I do tell you that I did not employ a man to enter your house."

"You can not deceive me, sir."

"I have no reason to seek to deceive you."

"The man confessed to me that he had been employed by you."

"For what purpose was he employed?"

"I caught a man in my house between the hours of one and two o'clock in the morning. I thought he was a burglar. I was about to send for a policeman, when the man begged me not to do so, and promised a full confession of the purpose of his visit to my apartments. I let him confess."

"And what did he say my purpose was? Will you tell me?"

"He said you had employed him to steal a girl that was under my protection."

"The impudent impostor!"

"Oh, certainly; I knew you would deny it."

"Certainly I will deny it. See here, you know the man's story was false."

"How do I chance to know that his story is false?"

"You know I have no use for the girl. She is not the heir."

Archie gave a start at that moment. A strange and startling revelation appeared to come to him. He now understood the resemblance.

"I know she is not the first heir."

"What do you mean?"

"If the boy is dead, she is the heir."

"But the boy lives."

"You know he lives?"

"Yes; and, what is more, I have been in communication with him."

"I know your last statement is false," said the woman.

"How is it you know so much?"

"I am assured you know nothing about the boy. You do not know whether he is alive or dead. I know all about it, and what is more, I know your scheme—your whole scheme—and I can spoil it. I could have done so at any moment."

"So you think I have a scheme?"

"I know you have a scheme."

"And you can spoil it?"

"I can—yes. All I have to do is touch a button, and you will be called to an accounting."

"If you know so much, why do you not act?"

"I'll tell you."

"Do so."

"If I touch the button, I spoil my own chances as well as yours."

"How?"

"I can not make a deal."

"So you wish to make a deal?"

"Yes. It is now time that we talked plainly."

"Well, do so."

"You can never carry out your scheme without my aid."

"How can you aid me?"

"I can put both the girl and the boy out of the way."

"Well, if you do that?"

"You can steal the whole estate."

"And you think I want to steal the whole estate?"

"I know you do. That is plain talk, is it not?"

"Yes, you are talking very plainly. Now, let me see if I understand you. Your proposition is to put both the boy and girl out of the way?"

"Yes."

"Let me ask you one more question: Have you absolute proof as to the identity of the boy and girl?"

"I have."

"Now, what is your proposition?"

"My proposition is that we divide the estate."

"This is a very startling proposition."

"It is; but those are my terms."

The man was thoughtful a moment, but at length said:

"There is one fact you overlook."

"What is that?"

"I have only your word that you can do all you say."

"What more do you want?"

"I want the proof."

"What proof?"

"The proof that the boy and girl live—that they are the real heirs—that their identity can be established. When you prove all this to me, we can talk."

"You are very cunning," was the woman's answer.

"You must take me as lacking ordinary common sense if you think I will make terms with you on your mere statements."

"I can prove all my statements."

"Before we can talk to the point, you must do so."

"I have a secret that has been withheld from you."

"No doubt you have many secrets; and now, madame, I have a secret that I have withheld from you, and some day I will have a great surprise for you."

CHAPTER XL.

THE woman, upon hearing the man's declaration, moved uneasily in her chair, and there came a scared look in her eyes. After a moment she said:

"If you have a surprise for me, you will never have a better opportunity for working your surprise."

"I am not prepared at present."

"You are playing a very deep game, sir; at least, you think so; but you are making a great mistake."

"It is possible I am making a mistake."

"You certainly are, sir."

"You and I may differ as to the character of my mistake."

"I think not; but as you think it possible you are making a mistake, will you tell me in what direction you think you are going wrong?"

The gentleman appeared thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"Probably the time has arrived for me to speak plainly."

"Yes, sir; the time has indeed arrived for you to speak plainly."

"You say you have followed me?"

"I have, sir."

"And you have reached certain conclusions as concerns my purpose?"

"I have."

"You think I am a villain?"

"I think you are a schemer."

The gentleman was perfectly cool in his demeanor as he said:

"This espionage has not been confined to one side, madame."

The woman glared, and in an agitated tone, said:

"What do you mean?"

"You spoke of touching a button?"

"I did."

"I can touch a button, and probably it is my great mistake that I did not do it."

"You speak in riddles."

Archie could see that the woman was very nervous.

A silence followed. The woman appeared to be lost in deep thought, and at length she said:

"We will come to a perfect understanding."

"Suppose we admit your statement to be true."

"It is true."

"Very well."

"And now the question arises, are you willing to make terms, or shall it be war?"

"That is for you to decide, madame."

"Explain."

"I am better prepared to go to war than make terms; and now, it is time for you to understand that I have not only established your real identity, but the identity of your husband. I

can touch a button, and you and your husband will be arrested, tried, and convicted as criminals. I can furnish proof of your guilt. A word from me, and you lose your liberty. That is plain talk, is it not?"

The woman laughed right out, and said:

"It is evident you have wasted a great deal of time and energy."

"How?"

"The police have been on our track for months. They have more information than you have, but they have not sufficient; and you

can know from now out that you can not scare any one in that direction; and I repeat, if you succeed in your scheme, it will be with my aid, and without my aid you will never succeed."

"Madame, you have the girl under your protection?"

"Ah! you so suspected when you employed a man to shadow me."

"I never employed a man to shadow you."

"Why deny it? The man confessed you employed him."

"If any man confessed to you that I employed him, the man lied, that's all; but I do not believe the confession was ever made."

"You will never gain possession of the heirs unless you take me into the scheme. And now let me tell you, what we do must be done once, for there is another man on your track."

"Another man on my track?"

"Yes; a man who knows a great deal. He is liable at any moment to gain possession of the heirs, and if he does, your game is over. It will be a lost play. All your past scheming will have gone for naught."

"Can you find the heirs?"

"I can."

"And your proofs will be absolute?"

"They will."

"You can put those children out of the way?"

"I can."

"You are willing to do so?"

"If you make satisfactory terms with me."

"What are your terms?"

"I will be satisfied with one hundred thousand dollars cash down."

"The sum you ask is too great."

"You are a mean man."

"How?"

"Do you think I do not know the full value of the estate?"

"What is the value of the estate?"

"It is worth over a million dollars."

"Well?"

"A hundred thousand is a small sum."

"It is a large sum of money."

"Not when you make over nine hundred thousand dollars."

"Will you agree to take twenty-five thousand dollars?"

"Cash down?"

"Yes."

"I will accept it."

"Very well, then, madame; I will name my conditions."

CHAPTER XLI.

ARCHIE had studied Mr. Spencer's face, and he liked its expression, and the lad was led to conclude that the lawyer was a very cunning man. After his declaration, "I will name my conditions," he meditated for a long time, and his eyes were occasionally fixed upon the woman who sat silent before him. At length the lawyer spoke. He said:

"You declared you can dispose of both heirs?"

"I can."

"And twenty-five thousand dollars is the sum you will accept?"

"Yes."

"You can earn the money and furnish the proofs by one act."

"Name the act."

"Surrender the heirs to me."

The woman's face at that moment was a study, and when she answered, she said:

"I must have time to think over this proposition."

"Very well; you can take time to think it over."

"I will see you to-morrow."

"At what hour?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"I will be here to meet you."

The woman left the office and Archie maintained his position. He calculated that the lawyer would fall into a soliloquy, and he was not mistaken, for immediately after the woman had gone he muttered, in an audible tone:

"The time has come for me to act. That woman means to play me false. I am now convinced that she really has the girl under her protection, and I also believe she knows the whereabouts of the boy—the real heir. All these years I have been misled, and my own suspicions have undoubtedly led me to many conclusions; but now I am convinced, and I will act."

The lawyer ceased his mutterings, and, seating himself at a desk, commenced the reading of some law papers. Archie stole forth from

his hiding place, determined to consult with Captain Joyce before proceeding further in the matter.

Archie returned to the hotel and waited the return of his protector. Captain Joyce appeared early in the evening. He wore a disappointed look upon his face.

"Well, Uncle Billy, what have you made out?"

"I am beaten so far, my son."

"The luck appears to run with me, Uncle Billy."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, sir. When I go on a shadow I almost always strike something."

"And did you strike anything to-day?"

"I did."

"What did you strike?"

"Something big, I tell you."

"You haven't told me yet."

"I will."

"Start in."

The lad related all that had occurred. The captain listened attentively, and when the narrative was concluded, he remarked:

"You have done well, Archie."

"Yes, I have done pretty well."

"I now know how to act."

"You mean you can discover the plates?"

"No; I was thinking about the information you have gathered in."

"I wish you had more faith in my luck, Uncle Billy."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to let me go to Brooklyn with you."

After a moment's consideration, the captain said:

"I think you are right, Archie."

"We will go to-night?"

"Yes, we will go to-night. I must close in on these fellows, so as to have time to work on the other game. We will meet at the Hamilton Ferry at midnight, Archie. You can make yourself up for the night's plan."

"All right, Uncle Billy. I will be on hand; and we will come out with big results, and don't you forget it, sir."

"You are very enthusiastic."

"I am; between now and midnight I will work up a scheme."

"All right, my lad."

While Archie and Captain Joyce were talking, a conversation was in progress in another direction. The woman Elsie and Andy Brower were holding a consultation. The woman had partly revealed to the man the incidents of the day, and she had made other very startling revelations to him; and the man Brower gave quite an interval to deep consideration, and finally he said:

"Elsie, you are a very bright woman."

"Thank you."

"I begin to believe that there is money in your scheme."

"There is twenty-five thousand, sure."

"Twenty-five thousand is not much money. We can not live long on that, with our extravagant tastes."

"We could get more if it were not for one fact."

"And what is the fact?"

"You are not acting with me. You are compelling me to go this alone."

"I have a suggestion to offer."

"I will be glad to hear a suggestion from you."

"Since listening to you I have been thinking the matter all over."

"That is good."

"I will admit I see a big chance."

"There is."

"This man Spencer is playing you."

"Certainly; I know that."

"But there is one little fact you have not got on to yet."

"What is the fact I have not got on to yet?"

"You think this man Spencer is a rogue?"

"Yes, I know he is."

"You are dead certain?"

"I am."

"Let me tell you, my good woman, you are wrong."

"How?"

"That man is as square as a die."

"He is one of the most cunning men on earth."

"Yes, he is, and he is playing you nicely. He is pretending to be a rogue, but he is an honest man. He is seeking to win that fortune for the heirs."

"Nonsense!"

"I tell you I am right. I listened attentively to your narrative, and when I reach a conclusion you can be I am right. All he wants is to secure the heirs and put them in possession of the fortune, and he will not give a dollar to you or any one else."

"What an idea, Andy Brower!"

"It is the true solution of the situation. But we can beat him at his own game yet."

"And what is your plan?"

"That man must die!" came the answer, in cold-blooded tones.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE woman turned deathly pale, and there came a troubled look to her really handsome face.

"That idea does not please you?"

"It is a horrible suggestion."

"We will not mouth it. Yes, it means that he must be put out of the way."

"I will never consent to be a party to such a crime."

The man smiled grimly, and said:

"There is but one alternative."

"Let me hear your other proposition."

"You say the man Joyce has charge of the lad?"

"Yes."

"How is it so smart a man permits the boy to be robbed of his fortune?"

"I do not think he knows the lad is an heir."

Brower indulged a few moments' thought, and then said:

"That opens up a scheme, and if we play our cards well, we can win big money and get it as an honest reward."

"That is the plan I'd like to work."

"You have seen this man Joyce?"

The woman related all the facts known to our readers, and after an interval, Brower said:

"Aha! I begin to see something. Yes, yes, I reckon I am on to the business now."

"What is your idea?"

"This man Spencer has employed Joyce."

"It would appear so."

"We can play a big game and a winning one. We must secure possession of the boy."

"So I've told you all along."

"We will do it."

"I am ready to make the attempt."

"Let me see. I must think the matter over."

"No need to think; I have a scheme."

"And what is your scheme?"

"I must gain that man's confidence."

"You have struck the idea."

"I will make the first move at once."

"How will you move?"

"I will change my appearance so that you can not recognize me."

"And then you will meet this man?"

"I will."

"And how will you play your cards?"

"You can leave that to me."

"You must go careful, my good woman."

"I will."

"Do you know where to find him?"

"I do."

"You have trailed him down?"

"I have."

"By gosh! but it must be good play."

"I can play it."

"That man has talked with you several times?"

"Yes."

"It will be hard to lose your identity with him."

"I can do it."

"Those fellows, let me tell you, take their bearings from identification marks that no disguise will cover."

"I tell you I can fool him."

Brower considered a few minutes, and then said:

"You can try, for it will be no particular harm if he does go through your disguise."

"I tell you I will beat him."

"All right; start in. You will see him to-night?"

"I will try."

"Remember one fact: that man is in the employ of Spencer."

"I do not believe it; but I will be on my guard."

"If he is not in Spencer's employ, he knows the whole story."

The woman started.

"I did not think of that," she said.

"You will need to during the game you have to play."

"I will just investigate a little to-night, and then come and consult with you."

"All right."

Half an hour later, the woman, under a marvelous disguise, was on the street. In the meantime Captain Joyce had parted from Archie, with the understanding that they were to meet at the Hamilton Ferry at midnight. When the detective left the hotel he proceeded direct toward the house where the Brower woman resided. He had no positive plan in his mind; but he was out for observation, and prepared to take advantage of any little incident that might open up. He had just reached the vicinity of Elsie Brower's house, when he saw a female figure issue forth. He got to cover in time, and muttered:

"Halloo! I've got some of Archie's luck this time, I reckon."

The detective lay low and watched. He saw the woman proceed along, and he fell to her shadow. After a time he made up his mind that she also was out on an observation tour, and again he muttered:

"I wonder if she is out laying around for me?"

Captain Joyce had discovered that the woman was under a tight disguise; but he had marked her, and knew whom he was dogging, and later on strange results followed.

CHAPTER XLIII.

OUR hero had got on to many little incidents not mentioned, and he knew pretty well the woman's movements since she had first been run down by Archie. He was aware that she had been on his trail. He was also cognizant of the fact that she had good reason to shadow him, and, withal, he recognized her cunning and shrewdness. He saw her as she wandered from point to point, and at length, seizing an opportunity to work a change, he walked along and passed her under a cover that would enable her to identify him. A moment after confronting her, all his suspicions were fully confirmed, as he had proceeded but a short distance when a hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned and stood face to face with the woman. She wore a veil, and demanded, as he faced her:

"Are you Captain Joyce?"

The detective pretended to be very much surprised and perturbed, and did not immediately reply.

"Madame, what difference does it make to you who I am?"

"I wish you to admit your identity."

"This is very strange."

"Not at all. I have been searching for you a long time."

"You have been searching for Captain Joyce a long time, you mean?"

"No, I have been searching for you."

"Very well, madame. Like the Indian who is said to have first addressed Columbus, 'I am discovered.' And now, will you tell me why you have been searching for me?"

"I propose to tell you why I have been searching for you."

"That is right. But, first, will you let me see your face, as this is a very singular incident?"

"You shall, on one condition."

"Name your condition."

"Admit that you are Captain Joyce."

"I am Captain Joyce."

"Come this way," said the woman; and as she spoke she seized the detective's arm and drew him under a street-lamp, and then, quickly removing her veil, disclosed her face. The detective was really amazed, and for a moment he was staggered. The change the woman had effected in her appearance was really startling and marvelous. It was the most wonderful transform that had ever come under his observation.

"You do not recognize me?"

"Madame, I can not swear that I ever saw your face before."

"No, you never saw my face before, sir."

"Then how is it you know me so well?"

"That is a little matter which remains to be explained."

"I trust you will explain it at once, for I am really bewildered."

"I have a very strange revelation to make to you?"

"This is all very strange."

The woman laughed, and said:

"We can not talk here."

"Why not?"

"I have a long story to tell."

The detective indulged a little laugh, and his laugh was part of the rôle he had determined to play, as he said:

"I fear, madame, you have made a mistake."

"Explain."

"You can not play me. Go find some fellow with a bigger head."

"You are the man I wish to talk with. I have made no mistake."

"Plainly, then, what is your business with me?"

"I tell you I have a revelation to make."

"Go it. I am used to listening to startling revelations."

"Oh, yes, I know that; but I have a great surprise for you. I wish to talk with you concerning matters involving millions of money."

"Madame, this will not do; please do not attempt to play me."

"I am not seeking to play you."

"You say you have a revelation to make?"

"Yes; a revelation involving millions."

"Proceed. I am listening."

"It will take me some time to tell my story."

"I can give you all the time you need."

"I do not wish to stand here on the street."

"What do you wish to do?"

"Take me to your rooms; we will have time there to talk over matters undisturbed."

"Will you not give me a hint as to the nature of your revelation?"

"I prefer to tell the story in detail."

"But you can indicate it."

"What difference does it make?"

"I may convince you that you are talking to the wrong person."

"If you do not give me an opportunity to tell my story, you will regret it."

"You have the opportunity. Proceed."

"You are very aggravating. I am half inclined to bid you good-evening."

"I fear you are wasting time."

"I am not."

"Suppose we go to some restaurant?"

"That will do, if we can go into a private room."

"We will go, madame. You have aroused my curiosity."

"I will cause you greater surprise," was the woman's answer.

The detective led the way to a well-known restaurant where they had private supper-rooms. He and the woman entered, and were soon seated at a table. Captain Joyce ordered a light repast as a blind, and after it was put on the table, said:

"Now, madame, I am ready to listen."

The woman had promised him a surprise, and she kept her word.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The woman looked around furtively a moment, and then said, in a low tone:

"You were a firm friend of Archie Richmond, afterward known as Archie Pentz?"

The detective was taken all aback. He knew that the woman must have known his late friend, the circus clown, but how she should know that he and the circus man were friends was indeed a surprise. He did not make any comment following her statement.

"You do not deny my statement?"

"I will neither admit nor deny it."

"My statement is true."

"Well?"

"Will you tell me, first, all you know about your late friend?"

"I thought you were to make a revelation to me?"

"First answer my question."

"I will not answer your question."

"Why not?"

"I have no revelation to make. I am here to listen to one. Do you wish to know anything about the career of my late friend?"

"I do."

"You must do so without my aid."

The woman appeared disappointed, but at length said:

"You knew of his marriage?"

"I knew that he was married."

"Did you know his wife?"

"Frankly—no."

"I thought so. He married an heiress."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; but his father-in-law repudiated his daughter."

"Why should you tell me all this?"

"Bosh! You know my reason."

"Honestly, I do not."

"Archie Richmond left a son."

The detective remained silent.

"You know that to be a fact."

The detective still maintained silence.

"What reason have you for refusing to admit that you are aware that your late friend, Archie Richmond, left a son?"

"Did he leave a son?"

"He did."

"Well?"

"That son was confided to your care."

"Well?"

"You will admit the fact?"

"I neither admit nor deny. Proceed."

"You know that son is an heir to a large estate."

"Well?"

"That son is being deprived of his estate. Eventually he will be robbed, unless you and I come to an understanding."

"This is, indeed, a very startling revelation."

"It is the truth."

"Who left the property to this lad?"

"His grandfather."

"Very well; what is to prevent his gaining possession of the estate?"

The woman looked at the detective, and nodding her head in a significant manner, said:

"There is a mystery connected with the inheritance."

"Well?"

"Otherwise the lad would be in possession."

"What is the mystery?"

"Young Archie Richmond, before the law, stands, recorded as a deceased person."

"Well?"

"I am the only person living who can furnish the proofs that Archie Richmond, the heir, still lives. I am the only person living who can furnish the absolute proof needed to establish his identity."

"It is well that you can do this act of justice."

"Oh, yes; but there is something to be considered."

"Proceed."

"I told you there was a villain in the case."

"There usually is when there is a will around and an infant heir."

"Without my aid the villain can not rob the lad. Without my aid the lad can not get possession of his estate."

"Well?"

"I am poor."

"I am sorry for you."

"Nonsense. You can see what I am getting at."

"I can not."

"The villain is willing to pay a large sum for my aid."

"Madame, who are you?"

"It does not matter, unless we come to terms."

"What are your terms?"

"Do you understand the situation?"

"I begin to see what you are seeking to make me understand."

"With my aid the boy can recover his money, without my aid he never can."

"Why not?"

"Simply because, as I said, I am the only person living who can establish his identity."

"Why do you not do so?"

"Because I am poor."

"What has your poverty to do with the case?"

"I have been tempted."

"How?"

"I have been offered a fortune to aid in stealing the boy's millions; or, in other words, merely to keep my mouth shut."

"And if you keep your mouth shut?"

"In a few months the fortune will be irreversibly lost. The villain will have won, and can defy any future claims."

"I do not understand how that can be."

"He will come into legal possession."

"Will you explain how?"

"Under the terms of the will, if the heir does not appear within a given time, the property legally becomes vested in the villain. All he has to do is successfully play a waiting game."

"And you wish to make terms?"

"Yes."

"And what is your proposition?"

"I propose to defeat the villain and put the real heir in possession," was the reply.

"I thought you would."

"Let me state it as I understand it."

"Proceed, sir."

"Archie Richmond, senior, left an heir; the son's grandfather left the fortune; the boy is supposed to be dead; the property is held in trust; and after a certain date it passes, under the terms of the will, into the hands of a stranger."

"Yes."

"It is supposed that the real heir is dead; you know he is not; you can furnish the proofs to that effect."

"Yes."

"The trustee knows the heir lives."

"He suspects it."

"He knows that you possess all the facts."

"Yes."

"He is trying to buy your silence."

"Yes."

"Why do you not sell yourself?"

"Simply because I believe I can secure a great reward from the real heir."

"One word, madame; is there but one heir?"

The woman's eyes brightened, and she said: "Ah! you know more than you are willing to admit."

"Answer my question."

The woman hesitated a moment, and then said:

"The lad has a sister."

"Where is this sister?"

"I know where she is."

"Why do you not produce her as the heir?"

"She can not inherit as long as the boy is alive."

"But she can come in and knock the villain out."

"But the boy lives."

"He is supposed to be dead."

"Yes; but there are those who know that he lives."

"Who are they?"

"You are one of the parties, I am the other; and the villain suspects that the lad is alive."

"And what do you propose, madame?"

"I propose that you and I come to a perfect understanding."

"You hold the key to the whole matter; you are the one who can bring about a perfect understanding."

"There is another matter to be settled."

"What?"

"The terms."

"Let us come to the perfect understanding, and then we can settle the terms."

"You expect me to reveal everything to you?"

"You promised me a revelation."

"I have made one."

"Let it be a full one, and then we will make terms."

"When I make a full revelation, you will know as much as I do, and I will be powerless to make terms."

"What is your demand?"

"Double what I have been offered."

"And what have you been offered?"

"One quarter of the fortune."

The detective smiled, and said:

"No, madame; I do not need your help."

"Oh, yes, you do."

"I know all about this matter."

"One word: I can tell you just how much you know, but no living person besides myself can establish the boy's identity."

"I know the villain."

"Well?"

"I can produce the lad and compel him to do justice."

"You think you can?"

"Yes."

"Even if you produce the lad, the villain can not turn over the property."

"Why not?"

"He will have to submit the proofs of the boy's identity to the courts."

"The trustee is named Spencer?"

"Yes. Are you in communication with him?"

"Not at present."

"Do you know the full terms of the will?"

"No."

"You had better arrange with me."

"No; you had better arrange with Spencer."

"What is your idea?"

"When you and Spencer have arranged your plans, I will break them."

The woman laughed, and said:

"If you know so much, why do you not produce the boy and secure his fortune?"

"I have been waiting."

CHAPTER XLV.

THERE followed a moment's silence, broken at length by the detective, who said:

"I begin to fully grasp the situation."

"You have waited too long."

"Listen, madame; if you will open the whole business to me, I will promise that you shall be fairly treated."

"No, sir; I must have a definite understanding."

"Very well, madame; I do not see as we have any further need to discuss the matter."

The woman looked surprised, and said:

"You have no need for me?"

"No, not on your terms as proposed."

"If you and I do not come to an understanding, I shall go to Spencer."

"Go."

"If I do, I will prove that the lad under your care is not Archie Richmond. I can prove the affirmative or the negative, just as I choose."

"You can do as you choose, madame."

"And you refuse to treat with me?"

"I do, on your terms."

"Will you propose other terms?"

"I have done so."

"I can not accept your terms."

"All right, madame."

The detective rose from his seat, and said:

"We have no further need to discuss the matter, madame."

Captain Joyce, you are a smart man, but you are making a mistake this time. Do not forget what I say. I can make or mar."

"So be it."

The woman appeared troubled, and said:

"I prefer to deal with you."

"I have named the terms."

"Do you know who I am?"

"I do."

"Who am I?"

"Madame, you are Andy Brower's wife."

CHAPTER XLVI.

The woman did not appear at all disconcerted when the detective betrayed her identity, but merely said:

"You should know that I am not wasting words."

"No, madame, nor will I waste words. I know all about you; I know more than I will declare; but one thing I will say to you: it is better for you to make your peace with me."

"I know of no reason why I should fear you, sir."

"No, you do not; but I do."

"It is better for you to make your peace with me, Billy Joyce, for I tell you, without me you fail."

"It will be my first experience in that direction. And now, madame, you can make me your confidant, or not, just as you choose."

"You will not try to understand the situation."

"I understand it fully."

"You do not. If you did, you would know that you can do nothing without me."

"I might move a little faster with your aid, but I can not buy it."

"You had better do so."

"I can not. I have made my proposition."

"And what is your proposition?"

"My proposition is that you open up everything to me, and I will see that you are rewarded according to the value of your services."

"I can not trust to that."

"You can do as you choose."

The woman appeared disappointed.

"Then we part without reaching any agreement," she said.

"It appears as though that will be the conclusion."

"I do not wish to part thus."

"We need not."

"What can I do?"

"Open up the whole matter to me."

"You are on the track of my husband?"

"We will not talk about that."

"You are ready to close in on the gang?"

"We will not discuss that subject, madame."

"You are only a mortal man."

"I do not claim to be more."

"You are in peril."

"I am always in peril."

"I might tell you something that would be of service to you in that direction."

"You have my attention, if you have any dispositions to make."

"No; go your way, sir."

The detective rose from his seat.

"Once more I appeal to you," said the woman.

"Madame, the matter is all in your own hands."

"But you promise me nothing."

"I have promised you much."

"Will you give me time to consider?"

"You need not ask time from me. You can settle that matter to suit yourself."

"The girl?"

"What girl?"

"Archie's sister."

"Well?"

"I know where she is. I can place her under your care."

"Do so."

"Not until we come to terms; and, unless we do, you will never see her."

"I have named my terms."

"Will you meet me to-morrow night?"

"I will."

"Where?"

"You shall name the place."

"I must be very careful."

"Why?"

"It is known to the gang that I have met you; they accused me of having given you information; they are watching me as they are watching you. I dare not meet you again openly. I will send a messenger to meet you, and he will conduct you to the place where I will await you."

The detective meditated a moment, and then said:

"Madame, one word: do not attempt a scheme."

"I merely want time to consider. When I meet you again I may be prepared to give you a final answer."

"I will meet you, madame."

The arrangements were made for a second meeting, and the two separated, and then a little game commenced. The woman desired to discover the abiding-place of the detective. She had lost her bearings, and there were reasons why she wished to locate our hero. Captain Joyce, however, was up to her little game, and avoided her. He gave her the slip in a very clever manner, and then he started to meet Archie, according to agreement. He was late, but found the lad awaiting him.

"Well, Archie, I am here."

"Yes, sir; and to-night we should make a big strike; there is to be a meeting to-night."

"How do you know?"

"Since I have been waiting here and laying low, I have seen at least six of the fellows cross the ferry."

"That does mean something."

"Would it not be wise to secure a little aid?"

"No; we will go it alone."

"If we go prepared, we may strike something."

"We will strike something anyhow, my lad," was the answer.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CAPTAIN JOYCE had picked up a great deal of information during his trip to Brooklyn. He expected Archie to tell all he learned, but did not consider himself bound by the same rule.

The two started for the vicinity of the old house, and when they approached it, the lad whispered:

"We are taking big chances."

"What makes you think so?"

"There are a good many of the gang on hand to-night."

"It's all right, my lad. We mean business to-night, and something, as you said, is going to happen."

"What is your idea?"

"We will get those plates to-night. And now, my lad, I propose to let you make a little reconnaissance. Go over to that house; find out how many are in it; find out just where they are, and what they are up to, and if anything happens, shoot your gun, and I will be on hand."

Archie removed his shoes, and approached the house. He had gone but a few steps, however, when the detective saw a dark figure approaching. Captain Joyce moved forward. He fell to the trail of the man, and finally made a leap forward, his arm swung in the air, and the man fell to the ground. The detective sprung upon him, placed a pistol to his head, and said, in a low tone:

"Be silent."

The man did not attempt to make an outcry. He remained silent. In fact, for the moment, he was too dazed to know just what had befallen him.

Captain Joyce drew a mask-lantern and flashed its light in the man's face, and again, in a low tone, said:

"Well, it's you, eh? But don't move, Brower; I've got you good."

The man had recovered his senses, and swerved:

"This is hard luck."

"It's good luck, my man. Your little *jig* is up. I am on to you now."

"It's good luck, you say?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"You have a chance."

"What is my chance?"

"You can make terms."

"How?"

"You know what I am after."

"What are you after?"

"The plates."

"Well?"

"You can save me some trouble."

"How?"

"By telling me where the plates are."

"I wish I could."

"You can."

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"I'll give it to you straight."

"Do so."

"I do not know where the plates are."

"Oh, I can't take that."

"It's true. I was on the lay to find out where they were when you gave me the *tag*, with the 'skin'."

"Do you mean to tell me you do not know where the plates are?"

"I do."

"How is that?"

"The boys went back on me."

"Why?"

"I reckon you know as much about it as I do."

"I'll give you a pointer."

"I am listening."

"How about your wife?"

"Well, what about my wife?"

"She has certain information."

"About the lad Archie?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"If I will let you go I want all that information. And, do you understand, a man who serves me does well for himself."

Brower made no answer; he was evidently considering.

"Brower," said our hero, "I tell you the *big* is up. I've got your aids here. We've got your *peas* all housed, and we will close in. Had I nipped you in the house, I could not have made terms but now we can diplomate a little."

"And what do you want me to do?"

"Bring your wife to terms to save you."

"You have seen my wife?"

"Yes; but she is playing points. She is a woman; she thinks she can win. But you are a man; you know better. You know the *jig* is all up. You had better get from under."

"And what do you propose?"

"I have a little business on hand here; while I am attending to that you can visit your wife."

"And what am I to do?"

"See your wife, and meet me later on."

"When and where?"

"Meet me at 5 A. M., at the Fourteenth Street corner of Broadway."

"If I get the information and give it to you?"

"You will have done me a service."

"And then?"

"I never forget a service."

"And the gang?"

"I will close in on them. I have them down to rights."

"You take big chances."

"How?"

"Suppose you let me go, and I get a tip in the lads?"

"You are the only man who can give them a tip. Now, if they get it, you lose your life."

"See here, Captain Joyce, I accept your proposition."

"I knew you would, Andy," was the answer.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE detective permitted the prostrate man to rise; they exchanged a few words, and Andy Brower stole away.

"That was a good turn," muttered Joyce. "That man understands the situation now, and he will bring the woman to terms. In the meantime, I must get on to the plates."

Our hero looked around, but saw nothing of Archie. The lad had evidently gone forward to do his work. A half hour passed, and Andy

reappeared and approached the spot where Captain Joyce awaited him.

"Yes, sir; we'll get 'em sure to-night."

"Sing out your tenor."

"I got into the house."

"Good enough."

"They have been holding a meeting. I got down at the key-hole in time to overhear their plans."

"And what will they do?"

"A committee has been appointed to go and get the plates. They are to bring them to the old house."

"Well?"

"They are to divide them up, and then different committees are to dispose of them, and the gang is to flit for a season until all blows over. They think now something is in the wind."

"They are right."

"They doubt the woman's fidelity."

"I see."

"They will not trust Brower."

"And what are we to do, my lad?"

"Lay low, I should say."

"For what purpose?"

"They are to bring the plates to the old house. We can locate them, and in good time close in."

Captain Joyce smiled, and said:

"We will lay low a few moments, Archie, and now is our time."

As the captain spoke, three men were seen to step from the old house.

"That is the committee," whispered Archie.

Captain Joyce and his boy watched the men a few moments, while the latter stood in consultation, and when they moved off our two heroes followed. The men proceeded to a little house some distance away and disappeared.

"They are after the plates now, sure," said Archie.

"And so are we," was the response.

Fully half an hour elapsed, and the men reappeared, and they were bearing something with them.

The men proceeded direct to the old house, and then Captain Joyce said, in a solemn tone:

"Archie, you can return home now."

"Just when the fun is about to commence?"

"It may prove a tragedy, my lad. And now, let me tell you, in my valise you will find a letter, and in that letter you will learn all the instructions I have to leave to you in case anything should happen to me."

"But you will not send me away?"

"Yes, you must go; but let me tell you now, my lad, if I recover those plates, I owe it all to you, and some day you will be a great man; but you must go now, as I have but little time to act."

"Do not send me away."

"I do not wish you to be present. Those men may show fight."

"I can fight."

"I know that, my lad, but it will be no place for a youth like you."

"Let me hang around in the neighborhood, to be on hand."

The detective considered a moment, and then said:

"Very well; you can shift around; but keep away from the old house."

Archie moved off, and the detective advanced toward the rendezvous of the gang. When quite near the old house he came to a halt, and signaled. An instant later there came an answering signal, and he muttered:

"It's all right now; the scene ends."

Captain Joyce advanced straight to the old house. He passed around to the rear end and managed to gain an entrance through a window. Once in the great hall, he stepped forward to the door of the room in which the men were assembled. He halted at the door and listened. He overheard considerable talking, and finally he put his hand on the knob, pushed the door open, and stood on the threshold. It was a strange scene that presented itself at that moment.

There were at least a dozen men in the room, and they all glared as though an apparition had suddenly presented itself before them.

A full minute elapsed, and it was the detective who broke the silence. He said:

"Good-evening, gentlemen."

One of the men mustered courage to say:

"Who are you?"

"Don't you recognize me?"

"No."

"Gentlemen, I have been acquainted with you all for some time."

"What do you want here?" came the question.

"Can't you guess what I want?"

"No. Will you name your business?"

"You asked me a question?"

"I asked you what you want here."

"And you can not guess?"

"No."

"Gentlemen, I want you. Yes, I want you all."

CHAPTER XLIX.

IMMEDIATELY after the detective's last remark there followed a scene. The men all rose to their feet. Each man was armed. They meant fight.

"Easy, gentlemen, easy," said the detective.

"You are a fraud," came the declaration.

"Easy, gentlemen; take it easy," again came the suggestion.

One man uttered an oath and raised his revolver. The next instant there came a crash; the lamp had been shattered, and the men were in darkness. Then there arose on all sides a volley of oaths. Indeed, there was terrible confusion, and a break. The men made for the windows; crash followed crash, and then all was still, and soon a bright light flashed over the room. There was not a man present, and Captain Joyce remarked:

"I reckon they have all run into the net."

He stepped back into the hall, and he heard a whistle. He answered it, and there came a flash of light from an opposite quarter, and the detective demanded, in an interrogative tone:

"Well?"

"It's all right, sir."

"You have them?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are sure?"

"We have twelve, sir."

"Good enough; bring a light."

The man answered:

"I have it here."

And the next instant there shone a clear, steady light. The detective, accompanied by his pal, entered the room. The brightness from the lamp shone around, and our hero said, as his eyes fell upon certain objects:

"At last! yes, at last we win."

"It's a go, captain."

"Sure; and it's the best job to date."

Captain Joyce, as our readers have discovered, had gone to the place fully prepared for a close. He knew he had a desperate lot of men to deal with. He wished, if possible, to avoid bloodshed, and he had made his arrangements accordingly. He had planned to have the gang attempt an escape. He had placed his men for such an emergency, and as they leaped from the windows they were gobblled up one at a time—not a man escaped. He had them all, and, what was more, he had closed in just at the right time. To the victor belonged the spoils, and the spoils were plates that had cost many thousands of dollars. He had them all.

"Nick," he said, "this is a good night's work."

"It went off so easy, captain, I can hardly realize what we have accomplished."

"But we have accomplished it, all the same."

Captain Joyce had been just one year on the track of the gang, and at last he had succeeded where so many had failed; and he owed it all to little Archie. He gave his orders and left the house. In going forth he passed the spot where the gang were held under guard. He did not stop, however, but proceeded along, and in due time once more uttered a signal call, and in response Archie appeared.

"It's all right, my lad."

"Oh, I am so glad! I thought you were a goner."

"What made you think so?"

"After I left you I saw seven or eight of the gang go toward the old house. I thought you had walked right into a trap."

Captain Joyce smiled, and told Archie all that had been accomplished, and the boy was delighted.

The two soon reached New York, and the detective said:

"I have business on hand, Archie: you go to your room. Later, when I see you, I may have great news for you."

As our readers will remember, the detective had an appointment with Andy Brower. He was on time, and proceeded to the place where they were to meet. Brower was awaiting the detective's arrival.

"You are on deck, Andy!"

"Yes, I am."

"What information have you for me?"

"You must come with me and see my wife. She will tell you the tale direct."

"I see she wishes to make terms?"

"No; she has made up her mind to give everything away. She has a great surprise for you, and I reckon you will have respect for her, after all, when you hear her tale."

The detective proceeded with Brower to the house, where he had been several times on his own hook, and a few moments later was ushered into the presence of Elsie Brower, and the woman said:

"I must see you alone."

"I prefer that the meeting take place in the presence of your husband."

"I must see you alone. You do not fear me?"

"No. Go away, Andy."

Brower left the room, and for a few moments the detective and the woman remained together in silence, and it was the latter who at length said:

"I have made up my mind to throw myself entirely upon your generosity."

"I think there you are wise."

"I know you to be a square man."

"Thank you."

"What has become of the gang?"

"They are all captured, madame."

"And the plates?"

"Are in my possession."

"I am glad."

"Why are you glad?"

"I prefer to live an honest life. I have had a large experience among criminals, and crime is a poor investment."

"You are right, madame."

"I would always have preferred that my hero had tried to earn an honest living. He is a smart man; and all the talent and ingenuity he has wasted as a rogue would have brought him a fortune in honest pursuits."

"I believe you, madame."

"I want him now to turn round and be an honest man."

"I hope he will."

"You can help to make him do so."

"I will if I can."

"Your word is good. And now I will tell you a strange tale."

CHAPTER L.

It was indeed a strange tale that the woman Elsie Brower related to our hero. We will not repeat the narrative in detail, but merely give a synopsis of the story. Indeed, it is sufficient to state that it was the old story. One child was reported dead, and it had been made to appear that the other had been stolen. Elsie Brower was the sister of the woman who had charge of the children, and the woman possessed all the proofs to establish their identity, and these she surrendered to our hero.

Elsie was under the impression that the lawyer, Mr. Spencer, was a rascal, and she intimated that he knew well enough that the children were living, but really desired to make it appear that they were both dead. The woman also revealed how she had deceived Spencer, claiming to have been actuated at first by good motives, but afterward having an idea of making something out of her information.

The sum of all her revelation was that Archie was heir to at least a million dollars, but the other provisions of the will were unknown to her.

"And where is the girl Emily?" asked our hero.

"You shall see her to-day—later on."

"And in all this you are perfectly honest?"

"I am."

"It is well, in case later developments shall prove your story true—yes, well for you."

"And now, what will you do?"

"I must think the matter over."

"Will you act under my advice?"

"In what respect?"

"I think I can give points as to how you can capture this man Spencer."

"I will think the matter over and talk with you later on."

Captain Joyce bid the woman good-morning, promising to see her later in the day, and proceeded direct to his hotel. He found Archie awaiting his return. He and the lad held a long conversation, and after a meal and a nap the detective proceeded down-town to the office of the lawyer, Mr. Spencer.

Upon entering the office our hero, who was got up as a countryman, asked:

"Is Mr. Spencer at home?"

"I am Mr. Spencer," came the answer.

"Shall I sit down?"

"That depends upon the importance of your business."

"Then I'll sit down, sir."

The lawyer appeared surprised, and looked his visitor over.

"What is the nature of your business?"

"It concerns about a million dollars, I believe."

"Well, sir, I am ready to hear what you have to say."

"You have charge of about a million dollars which is held in trust for a young fellow named Archibald Richmond."

There came a sarcastic smile to the lawyer's face, as he answered:

"You need not waste any more time, my friend."

"Oh, I am not wasting time; and I have plenty of time to spare, anyhow, so it's all right."

"I can not bother with you this morning."

"You must, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"I want to get rid of that lad. I've had charge of him long enough. That's what I mean."

The lawyer stared, and after a moment, demanded:

"Have you a lad in your charge?"

"I have."

"And who is he?"

"He is Archie Richmond."

Again the lawyer looked our hero over, and then said:

"This won't do."

"What won't do?"

"Oh, this scheme."

"I am not playing any scheme, sir."

"And what are you getting at?"

"The lad Archie Richmond has been under my care for a number of years. I have recently learned that you are his legal guardian, and I propose to turn him over to you."

"Who are you, sir?"

"I am Captain William Joyce, at your service."

The manner of the lawyer changed at once, and he exclaimed:

"Can it be possible?"

The detective told his story—told all the facts as they are known to our readers. The lawyer listened with deep attention. When the narrative was concluded, he asked:

"And now, sir, what do you propose to do?"

"I propose to place the lad under your charge, and hold you responsible for his safety and welfare."

The lawyer suddenly rose from his seat and approached our hero with extended hands, saying:

"Sir, you are a good man. I am not the lad's natural guardian. His grandfather lives. I have no money that I hold in trust for him."

It was Billy Joyce's turn to look surprised.

"Is this true, sir, he asked?"

"It is."

The lawyer then proceeded and made a long explanation. The narrative would prove of no special interest to our readers; but the facts were that the old grandfather of Archie had good reason to fear that his life would be sacrificed, and he had permitted it to be understood that he was dead; but, as the lawyer said, he was alive and in full possession of his faculties; and finally Mr. Spencer asked:

"Where is the lad?"

"I will bring him to you."

"Can I depend upon you?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I have been deceived so often."

"I have no reason to deceive you."

"There are facts I have not revealed to you yet, sir."

"Why not reveal everything to me?"

"It is time enough when you make good your promise to deliver the lad over to my care."

"If there are any facts you have not revealed to me, you do wrong in not opening up at once."

"There is a mystery that has not been explained."

"You had better explain it."

"I will, when you have made good your promise. It is a matter that vitally concerns the boy. It is a very startling revelation, under all the circumstances."

"And you will not reveal it until the lad is delivered into your hands?"

"No."

"You will be at your house to-night?"

"I will."

"Then I will have a great surprise for you, sir."

The detective arranged an hour for the meeting, and went away. The lawyer had promised him a great surprise; but, alas! ere those two men met again Captain Joyce encountered a series of surprises of the most startling and tragic character.

CHAPTER LI.

Our readers will remember that Captain Joyce told Archie to return to the hotel and await his coming. He had determined upon his full plan. He had met with wonderful success. He knew he had great news for the lad, and he was rejoiced.

There was a great revelation to come, and he was anxious to learn its purport. He had determined also to see the woman Elsie Brower, and he intended a surprise for Mr. Spencer in return for the one promised to himself, and, as he walked along, for once he could not resist a little self-congratulation, and he muttered:

"Well, well, this has been a great day and night. We never know what a day or a night may bring forth; and here I have captured those rascals, recovered the plates, and earned my reward. But, better than all, I have solved the mystery of the life of my little protégé, and he will be a millionaire some day; and all this has been done within a few hours. I have done well."

The detective reached the hotel. He did not hear Archie moving around, and he concluded that the lad was taking a good rest after the hard night of excitement through which he had passed.

"I will not disturb him," muttered the detective. "He needs rest; so do I. Good news will keep. There is nothing particular to do until to-night, when I am to meet Mr. Spencer, except that I have an appointment with Elsie late this afternoon. I reckon I will take a little rest myself. I need it."

The captain lay down and was soon fast asleep, but in good time he awoke. He had been aroused by a noise, and, believing it was Archie, he jumped up and called:

"Archie!"

There came no answer.

He called again:

"Archie!"

There came no answer.

Billy entered his own room, which connected with Archie's room, and standing at the door, called again:

"Archie!"

There came no answer. He pushed open the door and looked into the room, and seeing nothing of the lad, exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be hanged! He is not here."

The detective thought a moment, and then concluded that the boy had probably risen and gone out to get something to eat.

"He'll be back in a few minutes, I reckon," he said.

Even as the great detective made the remark, a troubled look came to his face, as he looked at the boy's bed. He saw it had not been disturbed.

"Great Caesar! the boy has not been here at all. What can have become of him?"

Captain Billy knew Archie well, and concluded the lad had got on to some lay; but the fact was, there was no need for following anything up. The gang had been captured, the plates had been recovered, and the mystery of Archie's own life had been practically solved.

"One thing," muttered the detective, "the boy is well able to take care of himself. He is liable to turn up at any moment; but I wish he was here. His absence may interfere somewhat with my plans."

Expecting Archie to return at any moment, our hero lay down again to await the lad's return; but Archie did not come, and the shades of night came apace. Again the captain made an examination, but could discover no indication of the lad's presence.

"It's strange!" he muttered. "The boy never died this before. He has generally managed to give me a tip somehow. I left him, expecting him to come here, and that was in the early morning, at least twelve hours ago."

The detective summoned the maid. He asked her if she had seen his nephew in the hotel, and the answer was the boy had not been seen.

"By gosh! suppose he does not come back to-night?" came the muttered comment. "That man Spencer will certainly set me down for a fraud."

Captain Joyce waited until nine o'clock, and his little protégé did not turn up.

"Something has happened," he muttered; "that lad would not stay away like this. I know, without dropping me a tip, unless something had happened. I wonder if that woman and her husband have played me false, after all? Well, well; woe betide them if so proves!"

He proceeded to the house of Mr. Spencer. He found that gentleman awaiting him, and there followed just what he had anticipated.

"You brought the lad?" said Mr. Spencer.

"No, I did not."

"You did not bring him?"

"No."

"To tell you the truth, I did not expect that you would. And now let me cut short any proposition you have to make."

"I have no proposition to make."

"Oh, that is all right. But let me tell you I have been fooled too often. You can not fool me again."

CHAPTER LII.

CAPTAIN JOYCE felt very much mortified. He felt keenly the words of Mr. Spencer. He knew just what the gentleman suspected, and he knew that he was an honest man.

"My dear sir," he said, "you labor under a mistake."

"Ah! that is all right."

"I know what you suspect."

Mr. Spencer laughed, and said:

"You have good reason to know what I suspect."

"A most remarkable incident has occurred."

"Indeed?"

"I have a very simple proposition to offer."

"State it."

"I merely desire that you wait."

"I have been waiting and watching a great many years, and now I see through it all. You are a fool of that woman; and let me tell you that I can not be fooled by either one of you."

Billy showed signs of anger. He said:

"I care nothing about what you suspect, sir. And now all our engagements are off; I will not trouble you again."

The detective spoke in a decided tone, and Mr. Spencer recalled the fact that he was talking to an experienced man. He said:

"You will excuse me, sir. I was disappointed. I recall my words. What are the facts?"

Billy stated the facts, and went into other particulars that he had reserved.

"What do you fear?" asked Mr. Spencer.

"It may be all right, but I fear—"

"What?"

"It is possible the rascals may have waylaid him."

"What would be their purpose?"

"Archie would be a witness against them, and it may be that the woman Elsie Brower and her husband are at the bottom of the affair."

"What will you do?"

"I will set to work at once to find him."

"Will you report back to me immediately?"

"I will."

"You can come here at any hour. I will arrange for your entrance into this house."

Mr. Spencer gave our hero some special information, and Billy made his adieu. On the street, Captain Joyce determined to go to the house of Elsie Brower, and as he proceeded along, he muttered:

"If those people have played any game on me, it's all the worse for them, that's all."

The detective reached the house and made a reconnaissance. All appeared to be dark and quiet, as it was comparatively early. He lay around and watched, but saw no signs of life within the house. He began to feel uneasy, and finally determined to enter the place.

It did not take him long to carry out that part of his design. He gained an entrance into the lower part of the house, and cautiously ascended the stairs. All was dark, and there did not appear to be a living soul within those four walls—and, alas! how little our hero dreamed that it was indeed as it seemed. He ascended to the parlor floor and drew his mask-lantern. He flashed the light around, and nothing met his gaze to arouse his suspicions as to what he was to discover later on.

"I am really puzzled," he said, as, with can

tious step, he ascended to the second floor. He had masked his lantern and was groping his way along. He stopped and listened, and heard no sound.

He passed on to the front room on the second floor, and was proceeding to cross it, when he tripped on something and nearly fell to the floor. Billy Joyce felt his blood run cold.

For a moment he stood motionless. He well knew what it was he had tripped over. It was a human body, and he had every reason to know, with his great experience, that a corpse lay upon the floor. He hesitated about sliding the mask of his lantern, so great was his apprehension and agitation; but at length he did so.

At a glance the detective saw that it was the body of a dead man. He had one comfort: it was a man's body; it was not the dead form of his little friend.

The body lay on its face. Billy turned it over and flashed his light on the dead, distorted face, and at once he ejaculated:

"Great Caesar! what does this portend? It is Andy Brower's body—the man has been murdered."

There was no doubt as to the identity of the body, and after an examination our hero was fully satisfied that it had been a murder.

"Well, well," he moaned, in a husky voice, "what does it all mean?"

He commenced an examination. He looked around the room and saw that there had been a scuffle—not a desperate one—but there was evidence that the man had not died without a struggle.

The detective let the body lay, and went into the adjoining room. There he found everything in perfect order. He searched all through the house, but could discover no further signs of the tragedy. He was deeply concerned; he thought of many possibilities, and among them all was the ruling query—what had become of little Archie? He was satisfied at last that the lad's absence was enforced—that some ill had befallen him; and the discovery of Brower's body caused him to fear the worst. He sat down to think matters over.

Where was Elsie? Had she a hand in the death of her husband? He recalled every incident of his connection with the gang, and especially all that had passed between him and the dead man's wife, and finally he muttered:

"No; she loved that man. His death can not be laid to her instigation. She really desired to become an honest woman. She did make a full and complete confession to me. What she told me was the truth from A to Z. The gang is at the bottom of this affair; and now the question is, what has become of the woman and Archie?"

Billy Joyce commenced a more thorough examination. He opened drawers and went into closets. He found many things that told a tale, but nothing that tended to throw any light on the tragedy.

"These fellows had confederates in this city. They have started out to go any lengths to kill off evidence. But what good does it do them? I live."

The detective discerned that they must have feared that Brower and his wife would turn state's evidence. The latter conclusion accounted for the murder. But where was Elsie? Where was Archie? Had they murdered one or both? It looked as though indeed the bright lad was dead.

CHAPTER LIII.

The detective had descended to the parlor, and was looking around, when suddenly there came a click.

Billy dropped like a flash, and as he did so there came a slight flash and report. He saw the direction from whence the flash and report came. His own weapon was drawn with the quickness of a lightning flash, and bang! it reported.

There followed a heavy fall and an outcry. Our hero leaped to his feet; he drew his club and sprung toward the point whence the fall and outcry had come, when he heard the words:

"You've done for me."

"Have I?"

"Yes; I'm a goner."

"You had it in for me?"

"Yes, I had, and if I'd had another pop at you, it would have been you here instead of me. I know you, and if I had downed you, all would have been well."

"Who are you?"

"You know who I am."

"I do not."

"I am one of the gang."

"I suspected as much as that."

"Yes, we set out to down you and all of 'em."

"Who killed Brower?"

"I did."

"Where is his wife?"

"I don't know."

"Where is the lad?"

"I don't know anything about any lad; but I'll die easy; I am square with Brower."

"Why did you down Brower?"

"Because he worked in with you, and gave the gang away."

"You are mistaken."

"No, no. I tell you I've been on to him."

"You are dying."

"I am."

"No use to make any misstatements now."

"May be not."

"I tell you Brower did not work in with me. He was true to you rascals clear through."

"How about his wife?"

"She did not turn against you."

"Bah! No use to try and give me that."

"She never would have gone back on you fellows as long as her husband was one of you."

"He went back on us. She put him up to it."

"You are mistaken."

"Can't help it now. I haven't much time to talk."

"You have lied to me. You are dying with a lie on your lips."

"I've told you the truth."

"You say you know nothing about the lad?"

"I do not know anything about any lad. I never heard of him. I do not know who you mean."

"Who was in with you in the killing of Brower?"

"No one."

"Man, you're dying."

"I am, sure. I took my chance and lost. I meant to kill you, but you downed me."

"Do not die with a lie on your lips. Make what reparation you can."

"You think I downed Brower in cold blood?"

"I do."

"No, sir. He tried to down me. We quarreled, and I got the best of it."

"His wife was present?"

"No, she was not."

"You were not alone in this fight."

"If you know all about it, do not ask me any questions."

"It will be better for you to answer me."

"Bah! If I am dying, I am not a fool."

A suspicion crossed the detective's mind. The man was too independent—he was too gamey for a villain—and Billy Joyce made up his mind that the fellow was playing 'possum, and was not mortally wounded.

There were reasons—potent reasons—why the detective hoped his conclusion was correct. He did not want the fellow's life on his hands, although he had shot him down in self-defense. If the man was not mortally wounded, Billy knew he would not give his companions away.

"My friend, you do not realize your condition," said the detective.

"Yes, I do. I'm a goner."

"Then why not make a clean confession?"

"I was alone, and it was a fight. He tried to down me; I downed him; that's all. If I were an uninjured man, they could not do anything with me."

"But you confessed to me you did the deed."

"I only confessed that it was a fight; that he tried to kill me, and, to save my life, I killed him."

Billy Joyce was assured that there had been a witness to the murder. He was as well assured that it was a cold-blooded murder. He feared that Elsie had been killed also; and as to Archie, ah! that was what troubled him. He decided, as stated, upon his course. He said to the man:

"I'll give you a last chance to confess."

"I've no confession to make; I've told you the truth."

"You believe you are dying?"

"I am a dead man, sure."

"Do you want to leave any word?"

"Not a word."

"Have you no friends?"

"Not one that I wish to leave any word to."

No, sir."

"And you will die as you are?"

"I can not help it."

If the detective really believed the man was

dying, he would have reached a different determination; but as it was, he said:

"All right; I've given you a chance. I'll not stay here and have two dead men to look after."

"Take my advice and quit. I can't hold out much longer."

"Well, good-bye, old fellow. I downed you in self-defense—you will admit that?"

"I will."

The detective departed, and proceeded to carry out his plan. He was not a man they could fool.

CHAPTER LIV.

BILLY JOYCE was very much alarmed concerning the fate of Archie. He had at first suspected the woman Elsie Brower, but when he came upon the dead body of her husband all his ideas were changed.

There was a chance that the woman was dead also, or a prisoner with the remnant of the gang.

One fact was proved, the coiners were in a very desperate mood when they would resort to murder. He knew also that the chances were that many very powerful men were in collusion with the wretches he had captured, and in order to save themselves they would be compelled to save their pals.

There was another contingency: the body of Brower would be found. The detective did not wish to be mixed up in that case, and he had determined upon a course of action.

Upon leaving the house he went to a telephone station, and calling up the sergeant of the precinct, he telephoned:

"A murder has been committed in house No. —, — Street."

The answer came back:

"Who are you?"

"Never mind, you have the information."

"Stay there until we communicate with you personally."

"Never mind me. Go where the murder was committed; there is where you need to communicate. Good-bye."

The detective left the place from where he had telephoned. He had no time to lose; his purpose was to find Elsie and Archie. He intended to be on hand at the right moment after the police had taken charge of the case; but in the meantime, as stated, he intended to start on a shadow to find out what had become of Archie, and he knew he had big job on hand.

Billy Joyce went back to his hotel. He renewed his inquiries, but could get no word. It was evident that the lad had not engaged in any little scheme. He would have reported back. It was a certainty that something had happened to him.

Satisfied finally as to the work he had in hand, the detective got himself up and proceeded to the house of Elsie Brower. He had prepared himself all right. He reached the house, and saw that the police were in charge, and the question arose as to how he could get in. After a moment he decided upon his course. He went to the front door. As he ascended the stoop the door was opened, and a policeman inquired:

"What do you want?"

"That's all right," said Billy, in a confident and assured tone.

"But you can't enter here," said the officer.

"Who'll stop me?"

As Billy spoke he stepped forward, and his manner was so assuring, the officer permitted him to pass, and merely glanced after him, with the remark:

"I wonder who he is?"

Billy ascended to the floor where the body lay. Two men were in the room. They looked at Billy, when the latter drew a note-book from his pocket and pretended to make notes, and one of the men remarked to the other.

"A reporter."

Billy assumed a confident air, and said:

"Good-day, gentlemen."

"Who gave you an order to come in here?"

"That's all right. What do you make out of this case?"

"We have nothing to say for publication."

"You're wrong, gentlemen."

"We know our business."

"And you won't give me anything?"

"No."

"All right. I'll pick up what I can and say what I choose; but if you gentlemen were wise, you'd lead me off."

"How?"

"Tell me just what you do want me to say."

and thereby prevent me from speculating and saying just what you don't want said."

"There's something in that," said one of the men.

Billy had discerned that the two men were detectives—ward detectives.

"Yes, gentlemen; I will say nothing, or just what you wish said, if you will open up. But if I have to pick up my news, I'll say what I please."

"We might put you out."

"That's so; and if you do, I'll show the thing before you're ready."

"What do you want to know? Will you promise to print only what we direct?"

"Yes."

"Very well. What do you want to know?"

"Who is the dead man?"

"We are not sure—we think his name is Brower."

"What makes you think so?"

"We found a letter in his pocket."

Billy, assuming all the airs of a reporter, stepped over and critically examined the features of the dead man, and then said, after a moment:

"I know that man."

"Who is he?"

"Andy Brower."

"And who is Andy Brower?"

"Did you men never hear of Andy Brower?"

"No."

"They know all about him at head-quarters."

"And who is Andy Brower?"

"He is the notorious forger and counterfeite-money coiner. There is a large reward for his capture."

"Is that the body of Andy Brower?"

The two men suddenly pretended that they knew of him.

"Yes, that is the body of Andy Brower. Who killed him?"

"That we don't know yet."

"And you didn't find any one else in the house?"

"No."

"There's been a fight here. That man was killed in a fracas."

"We know all about that."

"And you did not find any one else in the house?"

"No."

"You don't know whose house it is?"

"No."

"I've an idea."

"Well?"

Billy assumed a knowing look, and answered:

"Maybe that's my business."

"See here, young fellow, if you know anything, you had better give it up."

"Where have you fellows been, anyhow, during the last forty-eight hours? Don't you know the Government detectives just captured a whole gang of forgers, that this dead man was their leader, and this house is—"

"Well, whose house?" came the eager inquiry.

CHAPTER LV.

BILLY Joyce was playing the rôle of a detective right up to the queen's taste, and he merely ejaculated:

"Well, well!"

"See here, young man, you know a great deal or you are putting on airs. Now, you will just open up, or we will be compelled to—"

"Oh, you fellows are getting cross. I've nothing more to say."

"Do you know whose house this is?"

"I've a suspicion."

"What is your suspicion?"

"It's my idea that this was Brower's own home. I am not sure, but that's the way it looks to me. There is one man can tell you all about it."

"And who is that man?"

"The man who ran down the gang."

"And who is he?"

"You, of all men, ought to know."

"Can you tell us?"

"I can't speak positively."

"What do you know, anyhow?"

"I'll tell you, on one condition, and I'll help you fellows out."

"What is your condition?"

"I want to ask you a few questions."

"All right; pitch in."

"Will you answer me?"

"It depends."

"How did you learn about this murder?"

"We were informed over the telephone that a murder had been committed."

"And who telephoned you?"

"We don't know."

"Now," said Billy, "answer me one more question. Who did you find in this house?"

"Not a living soul."

"How did you get into the house?"

"We broke in the door, after having taken a peep through the window."

"And you only found the body of that man here?"

"Yes."

"All right, gentlemen; you know your business. I'll talk with men who don't know so much."

The reporter started to go away, but one of the men seized him roughly, and said:

"See here, you don't go away so fast. You know too much. We'll hold you."

"You had better not, gentlemen. If you do, I'll turn the laugh on you. Let me go, and I'm m'm."

The two detectives felt a little foolish. They were not experienced officers; they were two chaps who had been promoted through political influence. Our hero had obtained all the information he wanted, and really desired to get away.

"Come, old man, we can be on good terms."

"Certainly; but you fellows ain't up to this business. Take my advice: leave things as they are, and report back to the station, and let the sergeant communicate with head-quarters. You will save your reputations then; otherwise you may make a mistake. This affair will make a noise, and don't you forget it."

Billy Joyce slipped away ere the two men fully realized that he was going.

We have not gone into all the details of what he picked up. It is sufficient to say that he secured evidence that convinced him that Elsie Brower was a prisoner, and his little protégé also. He went to the spot where he had parted from Archie. He remembered having seen a policeman standing near at the time he parted from his little mate. He also remembered having seen a bootblack half a square away.

Upon reaching the spot, he saw the same policeman on the beat. It was about nine o'clock in the evening. Billy approached the officer, and said:

"You were on duty here last evening?"

"Yes," came the answer.

"Did you notice a man and a boy around here?"

"I did."

"Did you notice what became of them?"

"Who are you, anyhow?"

Billy Joyce showed his shield, and the officer was all attention at once.

"They separated here. The man went one way, the lad the other, and I don't know how it happened, but I followed the lad, and about a square away from here he met a veiled woman. The two appeared to be acquainted. They held a few moments' conversation, and then walked off together."

"And you have not seen anything of them since?"

"No."

"Can you describe the woman?"

"She was veiled."

"But you can give a general description?"

The officer indicated enough to convince the detective that the woman was indeed Elsie Brower. He thanked the patrolman for his information, and started on his way home.

Upon the following morning the detective paid a visit to the Toombs. He was accompanied by one of the officers who had aided him in the arrest of the gang, and thereby gained easy access to one of the prisoners.

The detective looked the men all over, and selected the individual with whom he had set to work his little game. The man was a hang-dog-looking fellow. The detective was shown into the cell and left alone with the man. He took a seat on the cot and fixed his eyes upon the fellow. The man began to grow very nervous. He moved about the cell, and the detective followed him with a steady glance, and spoke not one word.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE infliction to the man at length appeared to become an exasperating torment, and finally he exclaimed:

"Great Caesar! why do you stare at me that way? Begone! I can stand it no longer."

"You will be compelled to stand it," was our hero's reply.

"I tell you I can't stand it."

"I tell you that you must stand it."

"Away—away, or I'll choke the life out of you."

"All right. Sail in. But when you do, I shall keep my eye on you."

"Give me one moment's rest, for Heaven's sake! Wink—close your eyes one second."

"Not a second," came the answer.

"Why do you stare at me so?"

"I have a purpose."

"Name your purpose."

"No, no; it's all right."

"Oh, man, man! you will drive me mad."

"And you want relief?"

"Yes."

"Then choke me."

The man had looked our hero over. He suddenly leaped forward, and was knocked down as though he had been a pygmy opposed to a giant.

"Mercy!" he moaned.

"I am doing nothing to you—only looking at you."

"And I am to die an agonizing death under that horrible stare?"

"Yes, my man."

"Burn me at the stake. Do anything, but free me from your glance."

"You wish to be free from my glance?"

"I do, I do!"

"There is one way you can escape."

"Name it—name it."

"And you will accept my offer?"

"I will accept anything."

"Do you know who I am?"

"I do not. You may be the devil."

"Ah! I thought you knew," came the answer, with a grim smile.

"Will you free me from that glance?"

"Yes."

"Then in mercy close your eyes!"

"Not until you do my bidding."

"What would you have me do?"

"Confess."

"I'll confess anything—everything."

The man was not hypnotized, but his nervous system had been actually fired under the detective's glance.

"You mean what you say?" demanded Billy.

"I do."

"When you confess I will remove my glance. Speak quickly."

"What shall I confess?"

"Name every man in New York to-day who is connected with your gang, and who is free at this moment."

The man moaned, and said:

"I can not do that."

"All right. You may prefer to have me sit here and look at you—and I will sit here and stare until you speak. I like it, and from this out I've nothing else to do."

"I can not do what you ask."

"Why not?"

"I am bound by a terrible oath."

"You will die."

"No, no; I will but go to jail."

"Think you so?"

"That's all they can do with me."

"You labor under a delusion. You fool! I've looked you through and through. I've recognized you. I know my man now."

"What mean you?"

"Ah! you know well what I mean."

"I do not know what you mean."

"Oh, yes, you do."

"Speak! my brain is on fire!"

"I have named my terms. You are a murderer. I know you well. Your time has come. You die—yes, you die!"

"Oh, spare me!"

Our readers may not fully comprehend the real significance of the scene we have described, but that comes of lack of study or knowledge of the peculiar influences to which human nature is subject under certain conditions.

"I will confess everything," said the man.

"I want the name of every man in New York who was directly or indirectly connected with your gang."

The man was thoughtful a moment or two, and then proceeded and made some very startling confessions to our hero. Billy made a note of names and incidents, and then withdrew his glance, and the poor sufferer uttered a sigh of relief.

"What will become of me?" he asked.

"I can not tell you. I can only say that 'the way of the transgressor is hard.'

When Billy left the cell he had something to work on.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE detective hung around all day until night. He had communicated with two of his pals, and had made certain excellent arrangements so as to be prepared for any emergency that might arise. He was satisfied in his own mind that Elsie Brower was a prisoner, and he also felt assured that when he found Elsie he would find Archie also.

It is an old dodge of criminals that when one or more of their number is arrested, to set about buying up the witnesses, and where they fail in buying them, abduct them, and sometimes, in desperate circumstances, murder them.

It was late in the evening when he fell to the shadow of a certain man. He came upon him accidentally, and at once fell to his trail. The man was a noted criminal—a fellow from the West—and one of the most desperate and daring scoundrels who ever violated the laws of the land.

Billy followed the man for some time, and at length he saw him enter a famous gambling resort that is well known to big gamblers, but not so well known, probably, to the outside public. He played a good trick to get in. He was on the lay. He saw a young man come from the place, and at a glance discovered that the young fellow had met with losses. There was upon his face a look of despair. Billy followed the youth, and at length approached.

"Halloo, Tommy!" he said.

"Oh, go away; that won't work," said the youth.

"Your name is Bard?"

"You can't work me. You lose time; so you had better skip."

"You've been in the game?"

"That's my business."

"You've been a loser."

"How do you know?"

"I was looking on."

"Don't lose time on me, Johnny; I've no money."

"I have," said Billy, and he went down in his pocket and drew forth a roll of bills.

"What's your game?" queried the youth.

"I've a grudge against that bank."

"Well?"

"Your bad luck is all run out, and you were just on the turn when you went broke."

Few people who do not gamble can fully realize the superstition of old gamblers; they are led one way or the other by the most trifling incidents.

"I was down on my luck."

"Yes, you were, and you were on the turn."

"What difference does it make now? I'm dead broke."

"I've money."

"That won't help me."

"Yes, it will."

"Have you gone all around this way to work me?"

"I don't want to work you, lad. I am going to put up the money. I will stand to lose, and divide if we win. You risk nothing."

"That's fair."

"Shall I call you Tom, Jake, or Harry? I don't want the fellows in there to know I'm putting up the money."

"You can call me Tom."

"Here's a couple of hundred. If you lose, I will stay by you; if you win, I may slip out, and we will meet at Keegan's."

"All right, as you are willing to trust me."

"Oh, you'll go square, or never play in that shop again."

"I take your meaning."

"I may want to fall out."

"You've some other game, Johnny."

"No. Here's the cash. Play cautious, and we'll come out ahead."

"A man always wins when he is bold."

"You're right."

"A man is always bold when he has nothing at stake."

"Right again. And now we'll get in."

"But what's your game?"

"Don't watch me. You are to play, that's all."

"You never struck a better man, whatever your game may be."

"Don't mind my game."

"I won't."

Billy and the young man returned to the tiger's den, and that is how Billy got in without attracting attention. His new acquaintance

started in to play, and Billy stood over the game, looking on. The man he was shadowing was also only a looker-on, and our hero had a good chance to study his face, and recognized him as a man who could be closed in on for an old crime—indeed, there was a big reward offered for him in the West.

The young man started in as a winner. Luck appeared to go right with him, and our hero was convinced the young fellow had indeed struck a true line of gambling philosophy.

The game was in full progress when another man joined the party. This man appeared to know the fellow our hero was trailing. The two men exchanged signals, and after a few moments, in a natural manner, walked off together to one end of the room. Our hero managed to get near them, and he picked up some startling news.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE two men had evidently met by design, and Billy heard the man whom he had been shadowing, ask:

"Well, what have you picked up?"

"Things look bad."

"How so?"

"It's dead on the boys."

"How?"

"The evidence. Every man of them will go up."

"I thought you had silenced the evidence."

"Brower is silenced."

"And his wife?"

"She is all right, and we've got a squab, too; but there is one pigeon free yet."

"Who is that?"

"The Government officer who trailed the whole thing down."

"Who is he?"

"Billy Joyce is his name."

The man who was putting the questions gave a start, and exclaimed:

"There may be trouble from that quarter."

"I reckon not. Brower's death was the result of a quarrel between him and one of the boys, and I reckon the lad who downed Brower is gone by this time."

"Did Brower give it to him?"

"No; he got it from Joyce. We think he is speechless and can't tell. We found him in Brower's house. He snaked him away, but he was unconscious at the time. He did not get his death from Brower."

"So it's Joyce who is on to us?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"Do I know him? Well, I should say yes. He is one of the worst men in the country, and there is but one way out for the lads."

"And how is that?"

"You must down Billy Joyce."

The man winked in a knowing manner, and answered:

"That's our game; that's what we are working on."

"How will you do it?"

"We will come the decoy on him. If we once get him down to the little lodge-room, he is a goner."

"Can you get him down there?"

"If we can get on to him, we will."

"How will you work it?"

"We intend to make the woman squeal."

"Well?"

"We can't get anything out of her. She will die before she will speak. She is a game woman."

"Then how will you work it?"

"There's the squab."

"What do you mean by that?"

"We've a boy, a protégé of Captain Joyce; a lad on whom his heart is set. The lad is our prisoner; we captured him when we closed in on the woman."

"Can you make him squeal?"

"No; but he is our decoy. If we can get on to Joyce, we've a big scheme."

"That's all right; but how are you going to get on to Joyce?"

"Ah! there's the rub; but we think we can do it."

"You can't make the boy talk?"

"No; we've tried it."

"Then the lads have a poor show."

"Not if we can lay down on Joyce. All we want to do is to get on to him."

"You have a big job on hand."

"We know it, but we have a good scheme to work. We've a good man on the shadow."

"You will never win. I know this Joyce. You will never down him."

"We realize that, but we must down him. Just think of it—twelve men to go up! No, no, we can't stand that."

At this moment a man entered the room, and, after glancing around a moment, he joined the other two men.

"What do you make out, Jerry?"

"Nothing."

"Have you watched the jail?"

"Yes."

"And you have not seen him there?"

"No; but we have one more thread to follow and something may come of it. I only ran in here to report progress, and I must go."

As has been intimated, the detective overheard about all of the above conversation, and while it was in progress he laid his plans. He made up his mind that Elsie and the lad were all right for the time being, but just as he had so concluded he overheard a remark that startled him. The man said:

"I reckon our decoy will squeal out."

"How's that?"

"He has been really subjected to too great a strain. Lilly told me she feared he would die."

Billy felt his blood run cold. He knew who was meant by the decoy, and he was the more determined to carry out his plan, and he muttered:

"If anything happens to Archie, it will go hard with every one of those devils, that's all."

CHAPTER LIX.

OUR hero had determined upon playing a great game, and he was resolved to take a big risk. He knew that the men would lay for him. He did not mind that; he could take care of himself; but he was set to recover the woman Elsie and the lad.

When the man left the saloon he went over to the Bowery and entered a place which has often been indicated in our several narratives. It was a place where for years and years the criminals of New York were wont to congregate.

The detective tracked the man to this place, and then hurried away; but within half an hour a man who was a striking type of a certain class in all great cities staggered into the resort.

We will not seek to mystify our readers. The staggering man was our hero, got up for the business he had in hand.

The detective found the man he was shadowing standing in front of the bar. He was talking to a third party. Billy, as he entered, looked around in a furtive manner, and he well understood the singular significance of his actions. He finally took a seat at a table in the rear room. He knew he was being watched, and he had really angled for the surveillance. He had been seated but a few minutes when, as he had anticipated, the man who had stood at the bar sauntered back, and took a seat at the table directly opposite.

"Halloo, cully!" said the stranger.

Billy looked up, but did not answer.

"Business is bad," said the man.

"With you?"

"With you, too, I reckon."

"I beg pardon."

"Oh, you do, eh? See here, cully: it's no use you're trying to put on frills with me."

"I reckon you've made a mistake, my friend."

"Oh, come off!"

"What do you mean?"

"I'm through you."

"I am a gentleman."

The man laughed, and said:

"Oh, come off! And now, see here: what are they on to you for?"

"I tell you I do not understand what you mean."

"Suppose I whistle, old man?"

"You can do so if you choose."

Again the fellow laughed, and said:

"Well, I'll be shot! You either play it we're or very bad. But, see here: if I whistle, you may come."

"Let him come."

"I might give him a tip."

"Do so, if you choose."

The man appeared a little bothered.

"You take it cool," he said.

"Certainly."

"Hang me; if I don't squeal on you if you carry your head so high."

"You won't squeal on any one."

"Why not?"

"You dare not."

"Now you talk. Come, come, cully; will you have a drink?"

"I may."
"What will you have?"
"Brandy."
"How will you have it?"
"Plain."
"You don't waste many words."
"No."
The man ordered the liquor, and after both men had tossed off their ice-water, the first speaker said:
"Come now, we've licked the salt together; let's talk."
"Go ahead."
"I can run you into a harbor."
"You're kind."
"You don't seem to want any help."
"I've looked out for myself for some time pretty well."
"You're very uneasy now, all the same."
"How do you know?"
"I've been there."
"Well?"
"Come, come; let's open up."
"Go ahead."
"Why don't you fall in? You know I'm on to you."
"Is that so?"
At that moment a man stepped to the door and looked into the room. The stranger ran his eyes over both men.
Billy Joyce appeared to be very uneasy, and he said, in a whisper:
"Did you say you could run me into a harbor?"
"Yes, I did."
"Well, now's your time. The pirate is down on me."

CHAPTER LX.

The man looked around cautiously, and said:
"What do you mean?"
"The lights are in on me now."
"Eh? The lad who glimmed in here?"
"Yes."
"He is your shadow?"
"Yes."
"What do you want to do?"
"Give him the shake, of course."
The man thought a moment, and then said:
"Oh, I take it you want a pointer?"
"Yes."
"See that door?"
"Yes."
"Go through it. I'll engage the attention of the cop."
"It might be a give-away."
"He ain't dead on to you, then?"
"No."
"So much the better. I'll give him a throw-off. You slide, and I'll hold him."

It chanced that at the moment the man who had looked into the room was busy at the bar, and Alvie said, again:
"Now slide."
"I'd like to meet you again."
"You can."
"When and where?"
"Here, as soon as the cop fits."
"All right."
"Now is your chance—go."

The detective rose from his seat and went through the door, and just as the door closed behind him the man who had been on the shadow stepped into the room, and in a familiar way demanded:
"Where's your friend gone?"
"I've no friend here."
"What are you giving me?"
"I'm giving it to you straight."
"There was a man in here a minute ago."
"Yes, but he is no friend of mine."
"Alvie, old man, you can't fool me."
"Honor bright, I never saw the man be-

"You never did?"

"No; honor bright. Who is he?"
"Bah! I can't tell you anything."
The man Alvie laughed, and said:
"I'm an old bird; you can't work me. If I saw the man, I wouldn't give you anything; you know that. But I don't know him."

"That's all right. It's give and take with me."

The detective knew what he was after, and so did Alvie, who merely laughed, and the two men separated, the officer going out into the bar-room. A few moments later he left the saloon, and Alvie muttered:

"Well, he's a green 'un, he is!"

It was all right for him to laugh. He thought

he was playing well, but our readers will learn how he was tricked, after all.

Half an hour passed, and Billy Joyce, under his disguise, re-entered the room, and Alvie said:

"You didn't go far."
"No."
"I went under a cross-examination."
"Then he got some points from you?"
"Not a point."
"Well, come, cully, I've done you a good turn; open up."
"You've shown a good disposition."
"Yes, and you can take me to your heart."
"Later on."
"Will you open up?"
"Later on, I say. And now, my friend, thanking you for your good turn, I'll leave you."

Billy went away. His game was working well. He did not want any break in it. He did not go to his hotel. He sought other quarters, and, as he lay down to rest, he muttered:

"I'll close in on the game pretty quick now. I am satisfied I have a good hand."

On the day following the incidents we have described, our hero called on Mr. Spencer. That gentleman received him very coolly.

"Well, sir, you expected to hear from me sooner?"

"No, I did not."

"I know what you mean; but let me tell you it is all right. The boy will show up soon enough yet."

"I do not know what your scheme is; but let me tell you I will not be fooled by you, and you are wasting time."

"You will think better of me in a few days."

"You must excuse me now," said the lawyer.

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Spencer went out, and the detective followed. The lawyer closed and locked his door. Billy knew just what the man suspected, and was willing to bide his time.

The lawyer hurried down the stairs, and Billy stood in the upper hall, when a lady came up the stairs. She looked around, and then knocked at the door of the lawyer's room.

"Mr. Spencer is out," said the detective.

"Do you know when he will return?"

"I do not."
There came a look of disappointment over the woman's face, and at the same instant our hero made a very strange and startling discovery, and he mentally ejaculated:

"What have I here?"

CHAPTER LXI.

The woman stood a moment, and seemed to be in deep thought, and then she asked:

"Is Mr. Spencer in town?"

"Yes."
"Have you any idea when he will return to his office?"

"About four o'clock, I think."

The woman looked at her watch, and started down the stairs.

"Here's a trick for me," muttered the detective, and he followed her.

The woman reached the street and entered a car. The officer followed; he took a seat beside her; but in a few brief moments, and while still in the hall near the lawyer's office, he had worked a transform.

The woman drew a paper from her pocket and commenced to read with absorbed interest. Billy looked over, and saw that she was reading an account of the murder of Brower.

The woman was deeply agitated. Our hero saw that, and he felt that he had struck a great clew. The woman rode up-town, and when she left the car the detective followed her. She went down Eighty-fourth Street, toward the North River, and entered a dilapidated old frame house which had been built before the street had been cut through.

Billy saw the woman disappear, and then made a survey of the surroundings, and, finally settling upon his plan, he again worked a transform, and, ascending the steps, knocked at the door of the old house. The woman he had been following opened the door, and Billy said:

"Good-day, madame." As he spoke he boldly pushed into the hall.

The woman glared at him with amazement, and inquired:

"What do you want, sir?"

"It's all right, madame. I came to have a little talk with you."

"I think, sir, you have made a mistake."

"No, I have not made a mistake. You are a sister of the woman known as Elsie Brower."

The detective pushed the woman along into a neatly furnished parlor. She appeared absolutely dazed, and offered no resistance, and, once in the room, Billy placed her in front of a chair, and said:

"Sit down." The woman obeyed.

"Now, madame, we can talk." "I do not know what it all means."

"You know that your brother-in-law is dead?"

"I have no brother-in-law."

"Are you not the sister of Elsie Brower?" "I am not."

"Do you know such a person?" "I do."

"You knew her husband?" "I knew of him."

"You know that he is dead?" "I know that a man named Brower is dead."

"You know he was the husband of Elsie Brower?"

"I supposed so."

"And you know the woman?" "I do."

"Are you aware that your resemblance to her betrays you?"

"How?" "You look enough like Elsie Brower to be her twin sister."

"She is not my sister."

"And you are not related to her?"

"Who are you, sir?" Billy hesitated but a moment. He was a quick thinker. He decided upon his course, and an

swerved:

"I am a detective officer."

"And why did you come here?" "You have not answered my question. I asked you if you were not related to Elsie Brower?"

"She is my cousin."

"What do you know about her?"

The woman did not answer, and the detective said:

"You must answer me."

"But I know nothing about this case."

"Then there is no risk in your answering me. It will save you a great deal of trouble. I can act at my own discretion. I may believe you, and you may avoid arrest."

"Am I liable to arrest simply because this woman, the dead man's widow, is my cousin?"

"You are, unless you prove that you know nothing about the case."

"I will answer your questions," came the answer.

CHAPTER LXII.

CAPTAIN BILLY JOYCE, as our readers know, was a keen reader of the human face, and, despite the woman's relationship to Elsie Brower, he was satisfied that she was an honest woman, as she claimed. He hesitated a moment after her declaration, as recorded at the close of our preceding chapter, and then said:

"What did you want when you went to the lawyer, Mr. Spencer?"

The woman started and turned pale.

"You see, madame, I am on your track."

"How did you know I went to see the lawyer?"

"You have just returned from his office. You did not see him. You intend to go again."

The woman glared in amazement.

"What has my going to see the lawyer got to do with the death of Mr. Brower?"

"Mr. Spencer is mixed up in the case and the fact that you went to see him is very suspicious."

"I can not see how."

"Madame, I waste time. I have given you every chance. You refuse to answer me. There is but one thing for me to do: I must arrest you."

"No, no; you dare not do that."

"There is but one way for you to save yourself. Tell me why you went to see the lawyer. Make a full and satisfactory explanation, and all will be well; otherwise, I must take you to jail."

The woman was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"Under certain conditions I was directed to go to the lawyer. I know nothing about the man. I never saw him in my life."

"Who directed you?"

"I can not tell."

"Madame, herein lies your connection with

the case. You received those directions from Elsie Brower, the wife of the man who was murdered; and now you see why I came to you, and you must admit that I have certainly established your connection with the case."

The woman appeared dazed, and the detective continued:

"I am willing to believe that you are an honest woman, but you must establish your honesty. You can save yourself a great deal of trouble."

In a trembling voice the woman asked:

"Is Elsie Brower accused of having murdered her husband?"

"No."

"Where is she?"

"It is possible that she has been murdered."

"That is what I feared, and that is why I went to the lawyer."

"And what were you to tell the lawyer?"

"Oh, I do not know what to do!" said the woman.

"You can trust me. I am your friend. I am the friend of Elsie Brower."

"You are her friend?"

"I am; and what you were to say to the lawyer you can say to me."

The woman started, listened, as a slight noise was heard overhead; the detective saw the movement, and a very startling suspicion ran through his mind. He had received a hint. He was a man of the keenest perceptions. There came a smile over his face as he said:

"Tell me why you went to see the lawyer."

"I can not do that."

"Why not?"

"I promised Elsie I wouldn't tell."

"Well, I will relieve you. The girl Emily is under your care."

The woman leaped to her feet.

"Oh, sir, why did you not say so at first?"

"I desired to give you a chance."

"The girl is under my care."

"Yes; she is here in this house."

"She is."

"What do you know about the girl?"

"Elsie brought her to me."

"I know that."

"She told me if anything happened, I was to go to the lawyer and tell him all."

"You can tell me all."

"I believe the child is an heiress. She is a grandchild of a very rich man. The lawyer knows all about it."

"I know all about it."

"I wish I were sure I did right to admit everything to you."

"You did perfectly right."

"I wish I were sure."

"You can rest assured. And now I wish to see the child."

"Oh, what shall I do?" exclaimed the woman. "I am not mixed up in this case. All I know is, Elsie brought the child to me. I had not seen my cousin for twelve years. She did not tell me about the child—only bid me, under certain circumstances, to go to the lawyer. I read of the death of Brower. I supposed the circumstances were presented. I went to the lawyer. He was not in his office. And that is all I know about the case."

"Madame, I believe you."

"And you insist upon seeing the child?"

"Nothing shall prevent me from seeing her."

"I will go and bring the child to you," said the woman; and she left the room.

CHAPTER LXIII.

The detective rose and paced the floor, and he muttered:

"Well, this is great luck. When we drift on a trail, we never know when we will fetch up; and this is one of the best side-runs I ever had."

Billy heard steps overhead, and he listened, and again muttered:

"I must have a care, or this woman may attempt to play me some trick, after all."

His fears, however, proved groundless; for, a moment later, the woman entered the room, accompanied by a beautiful girl, and, at a glance, our hero recognized the wonderful resemblance to his little protégé, Archie Pontz. He called the girl to him; she did not obey, but stood and looked at him with an inquiring gleam in her eyes.

"You need not fear me, my child. I am your friend."

The girl did not move or speak, and the detective said, addressing the woman:

"Leave me alone with the young lady a few moments."

"I do not wish to be left alone with you. If you have anything to say to me, speak."

A suggestion came to our hero, and he said:

"I wish to tell you about your brother."

A complete change came over the manner of the girl, and she exclaimed:

"Do you know my brother?"

"I am his best friend."

"Where is he?"

"I will tell you all about him if you will stay alone with me. I wish to ask you some very important questions."

"Is your name Joyce?" demanded the girl.

"Yes, my name is Joyce."

"You are not deceiving me?"

"No, I am not."

"If I were sure you were Mr. Joyce, I would not be afraid to stay alone in the room with you."

"I am really Mr. Joyce, and I wish to talk with you about your brother," and again addressing the woman, the detective added:

"Leave us alone."

The woman left the room, and the detective said:

"Now, tell me what you know about your self."

The girl appeared to be even brighter and keener than he had supposed, as she said:

"I can not say anything until I am convinced that you are really Mr. Joyce."

"Do you know anything about yourself?"

"Yes, I do."

"Who was your informant?"

"My auntie."

"Is your auntie Mrs. Elsie Brower?"

"Yes."

"What did she tell you?"

"I can not answer your question until I know you are Mr. Joyce."

The detective reflected a moment, and then said:

"I will tell you what I know."

He proceeded, and told the girl a long story. She listened attentively, and when he had concluded, said:

"I am convinced now that you are Mr. Joyce."

"Then tell me your story."

"I have nothing to tell. You know it all. You have repeated to me the same story that my aunt Elsie told to me. And now tell me about my brother."

"Why did your aunt Elsie tell you the story?"

"She said something might happen to her, and she wished me to know the truth. Now, where is my brother?"

The detective added to his narration, telling the girl the whole truth, and the two held a long talk. He learned that Emily had been carefully educated. He learned also that her supposed aunt, Elsie Brower, had been very kind to her. He was well pleased. Later, he called the woman into the room. He learned from her that only a week previously Elsie had brought the child to her, and had given her certain instructions. He also learned that the woman was a widow. She gave him evidence to satisfy him that she was an honest widow lady, and then he said:

"You need not go to the lawyer."

He proceeded, and told her all he thought it necessary for her to know under the circumstances, and he finally arranged with her to remain in charge of the girl Emily until such time as he thought it necessary to make other arrangements. He said:

"I shall trust you. If you attempt to play me false, you will fail, and you will get into trouble."

"I will not."

The detective had obtained many details concerning the child which it is not necessary to repeat at present, and later he left the house. He proceeded down-town, and again appeared at the office of Mr. Spencer, and he found that gentleman in his office.

"So you have returned to annoy me, eh?"

"We have had enough of this nonsense," said Billy. "I did think you were not playing a game. I may learn to doubt you."

"Tell me just what your game is, and we may come to terms," was the answer.

CHAPTER LXIV.

BILLY smiled, and said:

"I have found the girl."

"Well?"

"You can see her any time you desire."

"To-day?"

"Yes."

"But the boy?"

"We will have the boy by to-morrow, I hope. Indeed, I am almost certain."

"It is more important to find the boy, as you know, his grandfather is more desirous of finding him."

"He should be as well pleased to find the girl."

"He wants them both."

Billy had a longer talk with the lawyer, and then went forth to carry out his scheme. He proceeded to the place where he had met the man Alvie the previous night. The man was not there, and the detective sat around.

In good season the man appeared. The detective made as though he wished to avoid him, but the man approached, caught him by the arm, and drew him into the rear room, saying

"You are around again?"

"How is it you gave me the shake?"

"You are a stranger."

"You are very independent."

"Yes, I am."

"I can introduce you to some good fellows."

"You are very kind. I will bid you good-day."

The detective started to go away. The fellow sought to detain him, but our hero shook himself loose and passed to the street. He walked around the corner, worked a transform, and was soon again in the vicinity of the resort. He hung around all the afternoon, until he saw the man Alvie come forth. He followed the man until near midnight.

It was a long chase, and the detective was compelled to lay very close. He saw Alvie hold conferences with several parties, and finally followed him to a house, an old-timer, way down in the business portion of the great city—a neighborhood known as the Swamp, but a quarter occupied by some of the richest business houses in New York.

He stood for a little time, and saw a man approaching, and soon he exchanged signals. The man approached closer, and the detective said:

"Where did he go?"

"Into that house. Do you know anything about it?"

"Yes; this was once a fashionable quarter of the city—about a hundred years ago—and, what is more, that house was the resort of a gang some years ago. It was cleaned out; but if he went in there, it must have been put to its old uses again."

"I will enter that house."

"You will have to be on your guard."

"I always am. But who have you at command?"

The detective and the man exchanged some further words and separated, and then our hero approached and took a closer survey of the house.

There was an alley-way beside the house, and it did not take long for the detective to scale the gate, and he proceeded to the rear of the building.

The detective ascended the stairs, and he moved very slowly. He gained the upper hall, and heard voices in the rear room on the parlor floor. There was no light in the hall. He moved to the door of the room and peeped in. He saw three men in the room. He recognized the man Alvie, and the other two as the fellows he had seen in the gambling-room, and he muttered:

"Well, here I am, and it's a go."

The men were holding an animated talk, and, as stated, our hero could overhear plainly every word that was said.

Alvie was the speaker when Billy first put his ear to the key-hole. The man said:

"It looks bad, boys."

"It does," was the response.

"We must make that woman or the boy open up."

"They are both half dead now."

"Yes. Hang it! we'll be compelled to ~~face~~ ~~em~~ to save their lives."

"They are both obstinate?"

"Yes."

"It's queer how that fellow lays low as ~~as~~ as he does. Can it be possible that he is ~~on~~ ~~in~~ our game?"

"Not directly. But he is a keener, and, as a matter of course, would look for a little play on our part. He knows we are pretty desperate."

"But it's funny he does not visit the jail."

There came a strange expression over Alvie's face as he said:

"Between you and me, it is possible he ~~has~~ been there, and he may be closing in on us."

CHAPTER LXV.

The two men who were with Alvie exchanged glances, and one of them demanded.

"What do you mean?"

"I tell you it has a bad look. We must get on to that man, or hit. I've an idea."

"Well?"

"He is shadowing us."

"You must have points."

"I think I have."

"What are your points?"

"I can't put 'em in writing, but, it's honest, I feel a little shaky. I tell you I don't like the looks of things. We must down that man, or he will down us."

"Alvie, old man, you are not a blower."

"I don't think I am."

"You have grounds?"

"Yes, I have. I tell you it's grounds enough that the man lays so low on us. He has a game. The examination of the boys has been postponed. That means something; and the fact that this fellow is not seen means something. I see it all. He is working in the dark, and it strikes me I've been played for a fool."

Alvie told of his meeting with our hero. His companions listened with deep attention, and when he had concluded, one of them said:

"You're 'way off."

"But I saw him again to-day."

He told of his second meeting, and one of his companions asked:

"And what do you make out of it?"

"That he is seeking to win my confidence."

"And if that's the game, he is dead on to us."

"He is."

"Boys, we must investigate."

"Investigation won't do any good."

"He may see you again."

"No; he is through with me, if my suspicions are correct. I tell you he is dead on to us, and we must either hustle or hit; and that's just how it stands at present."

Billy Joyce sniffling as he listened to the talk of the men. He had been playing a great scheme on them. He had resolved to capture the rest of the gang.

"It looks bad," remarked one of the men.

"Yes, it does look bad, and what we are to do we must do at once. We do not know at what moment that man may close in on us."

"Hang it! what can we do?"

"If we could only run across him, I'd settle the business and take the chances."

"You would down him?"

"Yes."

"He is a bad man to handle."

"I discount all that. But we waste time. What shall we do—hit, or go for him?"

"If we could only get on to his burrow."

"Ah, then we would be all right."

"We can make that boy open up."

"I have tried."

"Then, hang him, we'll half kill him!"

"Do you want to try him?"

"Yes."

"I'll fetch him; but I tell you he is a dandy. He is the gamest lad I ever saw. He has been well trained."

The man Alvie rose from his seat, and our hero was compelled to dodge back. The door opened, and the fellow issued forth. He ascended the stairs. A few moments passed, and he came down again, and he was leading a boy who was blindfolded. Billy knew it was Archie. He felt like springing forward, but he determined to bide his time. He wanted the men to give themselves dead away. He could afford to wait, assured as he was that he could leap in to Archie's assistance at any moment.

Archie was placed in a chair, and one of the men said:

"Young fellow, you love your uncle Billy, I reckon?"

The lad made no answer.

"I've something to tell you. We have made up our minds to down your uncle Billy."

The lad spoke up, and said:

"You men will never down him."

"We will, unless you save his life."

"How can I save his life?"

"We would rather make a prisoner of him than down him. We will keep him until we think it safe to let him go. Tell us where we can find him, and you will save his life; otherwise, he dies."

CHAPTER LXVI.

Archie laughed right out, and exclaimed.

"You fellows can't scare me and you can't

ever down my uncle Billy. He will lay all you fellows out, he will."

The men exchanged glances. The lad's remark appeared to be a confirmation of their suspicions.

"How do you know that?"

"I know it well enough."

"He is so smart, eh?"

"Yes."

"He is not smart enough to find you."

"Do you men think so?"

"Why don't he come and take you away?"

"He is lying low, that's why. He knows where I am."

"What is his game?"

"I am not giving anything away."

"It's no use fooling any longer; let's hang this smart chap. We'll settle him first."

"You men will hang a boy, eh?"

"Yes."

"You call yourselves men?"

"Never mind what we call ourselves. We mean to close you up."

"All right; you can. But I tell you one thing: I'll never own up."

A rope was produced and thrown around Archie's neck, after a slip-noose had been made. The lad did not flinch. He only smiled.

"Now, young fellow, will you talk?"

"I've been talking."

"Not the right way."

"Is that so?"

The lad spoke in an aggravating and defiant tone.

"We are not trying to scare you; we mean business."

"You do, eh?"

"Yes."

At that instant the lad gave a start, and involuntarily, just for a moment, assumed a listless attitude. A little sound had fallen upon his ear. The men had not heard it, but they saw him start and listen, and Alvie whispered to his companions.

"Hold on; leave him to me. What do you hear, Archie?"

"A whisper."

"A whisper?"

"Sure."

"Who whispered?"

"A bird."

The lad laughed. The men were amazed.

"What did the bird whisper?"

"Take it easy, Archie; those rascals will all be downed when they start in to hang you."

"Well, this boy is a marvel!" muttered Alvie.

"You fellows can do a good thing," said the lad.

"What can we do?"

"Skip."

"Hang the lad! He is incorrigible."

"Of course I am. Christmas is coming, and so is Billy Joyce. You men are all downed—you are goners, sure."

One of the men drew out his watch, and said.

"You have just three minutes to live, unless you open up."

"I've opened up all I mean to. I have given you fellows a tip. You had better skip."

"Hang him!" cried one of the men.

The man who held the rope gave a tug. Billy Joyce thought the farce had gone far enough. He opened the door, and commanded:

"Hold on there, you devils! What are you about?"

The three men stared in amazement, and an oath fell from the lips of Alvie. The next moment there came a pistol report, and the lamp on the table was shattered. There followed a scuffle, and oaths and curses; and then suddenly the room was illuminated once more, and a strange scene was presented. There were five men in the room, and on three of them were handcuffs; and three madder men never stood and gazed with greater anger and terror in their eyes.

"Well, Alvie, old man," said our hero,

"I've got you."

"Hang you! I wish I had known."

"And what would you have done?"

"You never would have got the best of us this way."

"I've got you, all the same."

"You will repent your deed."

"Good enough. We will talk that over twenty years from now. It's the Government has you this time, sonny, and your pull won't help you."

Billy Joyce led Archie from the room.

"Where is Elsie Brower?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"When did you see her last?"

"I have not seen her since we were downed, chloroformed and put in the carriage."

Billy Joyce was disappointed. He thought he had run everything down; but once again there came a shadow between.

CHAPTER LXVII.

BILLY JOYCE asked Archie to tell his story, and the lad said:

"A few moments after I parted from you, I met Elsie Brower, and she said to me, 'Archie, you must come with me.' I told her I could not go, and she said, 'I want you to meet your sister. There is a perfect understanding between your uncle Billy and myself.' I told her I must see you before I went with her. We were still talking, when suddenly a carriage drew up. Three men alighted. They seized hold of the woman. I leaped to her assistance. The next moment I received a thump on the head, and did not know any more for some time. I recovered consciousness, and found myself in a carriage. I caught one glimpse of Elsie's face. She looked as though she were dead. I have not seen her since."

"You do not know whether or not she is in this house?"

"I do not."

"What do you suspect?"

"I have nothing to base a suspicion on, Uncle Billy."

"You stay here, Archie. I will make a search."

Billy Joyce was an old hand at searching, but he could not find Elsie Brower in that house. He returned and met Archie.

"I can not find her, Archie."

The detective entered the room where the three prisoners were. He ordered two of them to be taken away, and he was alone with the man Alvie.

"Where is the woman, old man?" asked the detective.

"You want some information, don't you?"

"Yes. It may serve you well to get on good terms with me."

"Oh, I see. I asked you once to be on good terms with me. You declined."

The detective smiled.

"Alvie, as it stands you may only be held on a prison offense; but it may come about that you will run the risk of greater punishment. It may lay with me."

"You will never get a word out of me."

"You are dead set on that?"

"I am."

"All right, I've nothing more to say at present. I've given you a chance."

"I am not looking for such chances."

The detective joined Archie, and a few moments later several other men entered the house.

We need not explain to our readers our hero's scheme. When he had the "follow" on the men he just arranged with the same officers who had aided him to capture the gang, and they were the men who entered the house and took charge of the three prisoners.

Our hero departed with Archie. He had accomplished a part of his game, and went direct to his hotel. On the way he remarked:

"I am sorry I did not find the woman."

"We must find her," said Archie.

"We are not bound to do so; but we will make an effort, all the same. It is possible that she is dead."

"I do not believe it."

"I have news for you, my lad. I have found your sister."

"You have found my sister?"

"Yes. She is now under my control."

"Take me to see her at once."

"You will have to wait until morning, my lad. The young lady retired long ago."

Archie and the detective reached the hotel. The lad was furnished with a moderate sum, and retired, while the detective sat in his room thinking over all the incidents that had occurred since the eventful night when he met his boyhood friend, Archie Pertz.

Our hero's little protégé slept far into the following morning; but when he awoke he was bright, and strong, and hungry.

After a good meal, Archie said:

"Now I wish to go and see my sister, and then—"

"Well, what then?"

"We will find Elsie Brower."

"My lad, I have very good news for Elsie Brower if we do find her."

"Her husband is dead?" cried Archie.
"How did you come to learn that fact?"
"I suspected it from something I overheard."
"Yes, he is dead."
"Elsie will be heart-broken."
"I fear she will; but, after all, in some respects it may all be for the best."

"That sounds very cold-blooded, Uncle Billy."

"It does; but you must remember that man was a criminal, and, sooner or later, he would have been called upon to pay the penalty of his many crimes."

"I am sorry for Elsie."

"I am sorry also. Time may assuage her grief, and in the end, for her, it will be a mercy. I think she is at heart a noble woman."

A little later on the detective and Archie started to visit the latter's sister.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

It was an exciting moment when brother and sister rushed into each other's arms. The resemblance was really wonderful, and the joy of the two relatives can not be described in words.

The detective left the two together and proceeded to the office of Mr. Spencer. He had been rather offended by the lawyer's manner, and determined to give him a very peculiar surprise.

After the usual greetings, Billy said:

"Mr. Spencer, I have called to make some very pertinent inquiries."

"Very well, sir," came the sententious comment.

"You say the lad's grandfather is alive?"

"Yes."

"And he is prepared to become reconciled to his grandson?"

"Yes."

"Will you answer me one question?"

"Proceed."

"How is it that the grandfather delayed so long in looking for his daughter's children?"

The old gentleman met with an accident, and for a long time he suffered from loss of memory. Indeed, he was almost idiotic. We despaired of a return of reason, but I am happy to say that we found a physician at last who succeeded in working a remarkable cure. The old gentleman is as clear-headed as he ever was.

"And he desires to find his grandchildren?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he?"

"In Ohio."

"Send for him."

"What is your object?"

"I have an object."

"I can not discern your purpose."

"Proofs will be necessary to establish the identity of the children?"

"Yes."

"I propose to submit proofs that you can not verify."

"Hardly. Have you found the children?"

"I can produce them if their grandfather comes on."

"Produce them to me, and on proof I will pay you the reward."

"I do not demand a reward; but I do demand that the grandfather shall be sent for."

The detective, after a moment's thought, made several very singular statements to the lawyer, and finally the latter said:

"I will send for the grandfather."

"When can you have him here?"

"To-morrow night."

"Will you have him at your house?"

"Yes."

The two men held a long talk, and made some very odd arrangements, and the detective departed. He determined to start in and find the woman Elsie Brower.

Billy Joyce went to the house in the Swamp where the arrests had been made the previous night. He did not go around to the rear, but went to the front door and rang a bell. It was some time before the summons was answered; but at length a woman appeared in the doorway, and Billy resorted to his old tactics. He pushed in and closed the door behind him.

"What do you want? Who are you?" demanded the woman.

"It makes no difference who I am. I want you."

"You had better be careful. I am an honest woman. I will summon the police."

The detective showed his badge.

"Oh! you are an officer?"
"I am."
"And what do you want here?"
"I want some information; and, failing to get it, I want you."
"You don't want a poor and honest woman like me?"
"Yes, I do."
"Let me tell you something."
"Well?"
"I own this house; I do not lease it. Yes, it belongs to me."
"So much the worse for you."

"I know what you mean; but that does not scare me. Those men who were arrested here were my boarders. I am not responsible for their doings; so, you see, I do not fear you."

"That is all right. But you are surely responsible for deeds committed in your house, right under your eyes, and with your consent. And, what is more, I have proofs against you."

"Oh, you can't scare me."

"We shall see later on. In the meantime, where is the woman Elsie Brower?"

"I do not know any woman called Elsie Brower."

"You swear to that?"

"I do."

"All right; you are my prisoner."

"You dare not arrest me. You will suffer if you do."

"I will?"

"You will."

Quick as a wink, the detective clapped the irons on the woman, and she weakened, and moaned:

"Oh! what, what shall I do?"

"Confess, madame."

"I have nothing to confess."

"Tell me where the woman is I seek."

"I do not know."

"You know the woman?"

"I have heard of her."

"And you know where she is?"

"I have a suspicion. Release me, and I will tell you what I suspect."

"Give me any information that will prove of service, and I will release you."

The woman was thoughtful a long while, and at length said:

"The men will kill me."

"They can never harm you. All of them will be sent up."

"You will never give me away?"

"Never."

"And you will release me?"

"Yes."

"Do so, and I will go and get the woman and bring her to you."

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE detective removed the irons from the woman, and said:

"If you attempt to play any tricks on me, you will regret it."

"I will not attempt any tricks."

The woman left the room, after having exacted a promise that the detective would not follow her.

The woman was gone about ten minutes, and when she returned, she led a living ghost, seemingly, into the room; but our hero recognized all that was left of Elsie Brower.

"At last!" the woman ejaculated.

"Yes, I have found you at last."

"Another day, and you would have been too late."

Our hero directed that Elsie be fed moderately, and he went to secure a carriage. In due time he returned. Elsie was prepared to accompany him, and in the carriage she asked:

"How did you find me?"

"I trailed down to where you were."

"Archie aided you?"

"No; Archie was a prisoner in the same house."

"Poor Andy!"

"Ahi you know?"

"Yes; he was killed before my eyes when I was captured. I was taken to my own house. They tried to compel me to give them some information. I refused. They abused me. Andy came in, a fight followed, and he was killed."

"Your husband's death has been avenged."

The detective told his story—told all that had occurred.

"And Archie is safe?"

"Yes."

"And the murderer of my husband is dead?"

"He is."

"What a life I have led! Ahi can I ever know peace again?"

"Yes, Elsie Brower, you can know peace again. You can yet do a great deal of good in the world. You are a very able woman. You are needed as an aid to good women in New York. With what you know of crime and criminals, I know of no woman who could do more good."

"I have some money."

"And you will have more."

"Who will give me more?"

"Wait and see. And now, where will you go?"

"Not to my old home."

"No; you would not be safe there. Better go to your cousin."

"I will go there."

Billy had already directed the driver where to go, and, later on, he led the woman up to the house and into the parlor. Long explanations followed, and Elsie once more met the girl Emily, and also Archie.

Every word she uttered was one of penitence and contrition for her past life.

That night our hero took his leave. He remained at the house of Elsie's cousin, and after Elsie had retired, he and Archie held a long, long talk which extended far into the night.

On the following morning our hero appeared at the office of Mr. Spencer, and he said, upon entering:

"We can truly congratulate ourselves now, sir. All is well."

"You have recovered the boy?"

"I have—yes; and the girl, and the woman—in fact, all hands; and now we are ready for the pleasant little comedy we intend to enact to-night."

Night came, and all the arrangements for the comedy were complete.

Billy Joyce went to the home of Mr. Spencer, and there he was introduced to the old grandfather. Mr. Spencer said:

"Mr. Lamb, this is the man who has been such a friend to your grandson."

A long talk followed between the detective and the old man. Billy related a long and very interesting narrative, to which the old man listened with the deepest attention, and the story was about concluded when a young girl entered the room. As the old man's eyes fell upon her, he leaped to his feet and gazed as one looking at a ghost. He could not speak; he trembled like an aspen-leaf, and finally ejaculated:

"My daughter returned from the grave!"

A smile illuminated Billy's face as he said:

"My dear sir, this is your granddaughter."

"My granddaughter!" murmured the old man, who appeared to be dazed.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Spencer was standing near, and the detective asked:

"What do you think of my scheme now?"

"I am satisfied; we need no other proofs."

The old man appeared to comprehend, and he exclaimed:

"What do you mean that I will need proof that this is my own child?"

"Yes."

"Why, in her face she carries the proofs."

"But see here."

Archie had entered the room.

"And who is this?" exclaimed the old man, gazing with wonder-dilated eyes.

"Your grandson, sir."

The old man had both the children now in his arms. He murmured:

"Now I can atone for my cruelty to their mother."

Billy Joyce and Mr. Spencer were two delighted and happy men.

Explanations followed. Elsie was shown into the room, and told her story.

Our story is ended.

The two children went with their grandfather back to Ohio. The old man lived several years after the recovery of the children, and when he died they were both made rich. He did not forget Billy Joyce nor Elsie Brower; and the repentance of the latter brought forth fruit worthy of repentance, and to-day she is devoting her life to charitable work, going from city to city, and her best and warmest friends are Archie and Emily, who are both married, and Billy Joyce, who is still tracking criminals, and who is to-day the same brave, conscientious officer, doing his duty modestly and well. He is one of the most valuable officers under the Government, and it was with great modesty that he furnished to the author the materials on which the incidents of the foregoing narrative is founded.

THE END.

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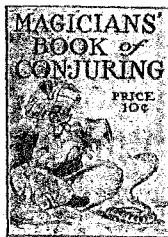
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